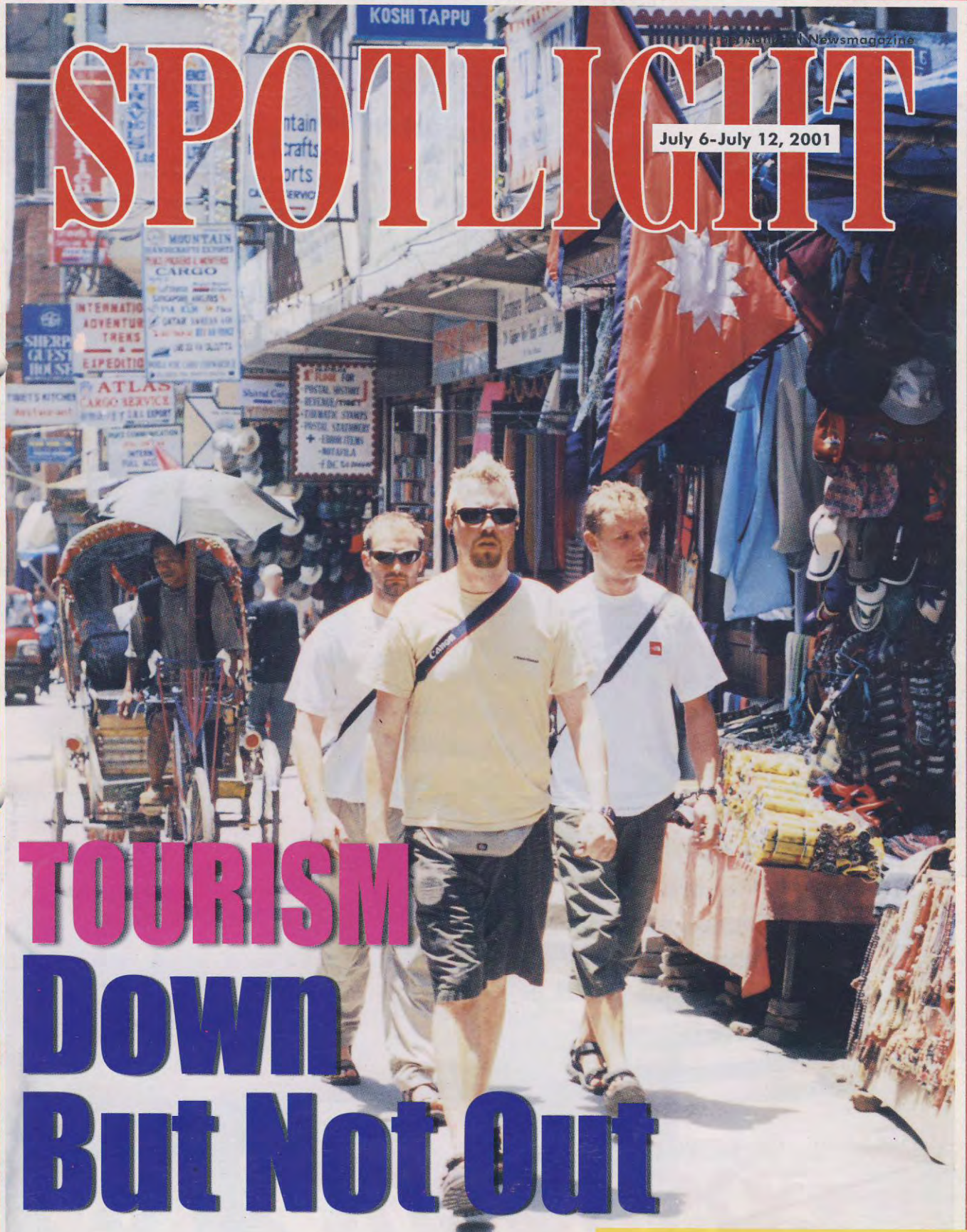


SPOTLIGHT

July 6-July 12, 2001

Newsmagazine



TOURISM Down But Not Out

- Dissection of Plans and Policies
- Monarchy: Anchor Of Stability
- Education Panel Report

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COVER STORY : DOWN BUT NOT OUT

After the June 1 royal tragedy, the Nepalese tourism is in a state of suspended animation. But swift damage control mechanisms could put it back on track.

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ROYAL ADDRESS : Lacking New Director

King Gyanendra outlines the Koirala government's plans and policies for this year.

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INTERVIEW : Prithvi R. Ligal

Vice-chairman of National Planning commission Ligal talks about the performance of the Ninth Plan.

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SPOTLIGHT

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The King's speech from the throne entailing the government's plans and programs for the year ahead did not contain anything spectacular. No sane man was expecting a revolutionary address from a government stinking with corruption and fighting for its survival. Moreover, even if the address had been prepared by some one with a little bit of integrity and imagination what difference would it make since the inept and inefficient organs of the government headed by an arrogant nincompoop could never have implemented it. As has been proved by the experience of the past addresses after the restoration of democracy, the speech from the throne has become just a ritual. The promises the politicians make through the royal addresses are not meant to be kept. They are made only to take the people for a ride. Since the people never seem to learn they get what they deserve. As the poor people have neither the will nor the means to get rid of such callous politicians, they stay satisfied with whatever morsels of left overs are thrown at them at regular intervals and keep on wallowing in their squalor and misery. Since these yearly phenomenon in our Parliament only contributes to swell the filthy purse of the legislators, it always fails to generate any kind of enthusiasm amongst the masses. Lately the House has ceased to function. It is a total waste of the poor tax payers money and whatever we can amass through begging. Many patriotic Nepalese sincerely believe that the House which has failed to function in the interest of its poor electorate must be dissolved by the king. If the existing constitution does not empower the King to exercise this authority, the King must suspend or even abrogate the constitution and appoint a caretaker government of all smaller and patriotic parties to conduct the next general elections; parties which have never held the reins of government. He must issue an ordinance giving more powers to the Election Commission to bar all corrupt politicians from contesting the elections. We have always maintained that the country is much bigger than the constitution and the constitution cannot be permitted to be used as an excuse for the corrupt and anti-national politicians to loot the country and take it to the dogs. We must establish special courts to try these corrupt politicians and mete them out just and speedy punishments and put them behind bars. Unless such harsh measures are taken, politicians in our poor country will not stop their nefarious activities. Can't they look at the mirror and see how they have changed into Malvolios from Cassiuses? Do they still remember the days when they used to go in tatters begging couple of rupees to buy their "Pan and Biri"? And they have the cheek to ask the King to declare his assets. If the people of Nepal are really serious to safeguard their hard won democracy, they must get rid of such corrupt and antinational politicians and bring men of integrity to serve the nation; men who will not take orders from any alien master.

* * *

Heads have started rolling. These are smaller heads. If these are all the heads to roll those who should have been taken to task seem to have escaped the guillotine. If proper objectivity is not maintained and delinquent are shown favor or mercy, it will not only generate unrest and smear the image of the new monarch but defeat the very purpose of the Commission. Moreover, it will fail to root out any possible insecurity in future. Nepotism and sycophancy have not only become totally outdated but are unequivocal storehouse for all ills and dangers.

* * *

It is being rumored that the Maoists have called for Bandh on 12 July. The country has paid heavily due to bandhs in the past. And we have, time and again, exhorted politicians not to resort to "Bandhs". Since Bandhs only exert moral pressures on the government and Nepalese politicians are totally ignorant about morality, Bandhs have always failed to make any impression upon the government. It only hurts the Nation's economy and exacerbates the misery of the poor people. As such, if there is any truth in the rumor, we would like the sponsors of the Bandh to give it a second thought. ■



Madhav Kumar Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Well-Placed Argument

Your cover story "Consensus Or Confrontation?" (SPOTLIGHT, June 29) has raised a genuine argument that the current parliament has been unable to do even its basic job. The continuous struggle for power among the ruling and opposition and the long-drawn demand for the prime minister's ouster have effectively overshadowed the parliamentary proceedings. In such a scenario, it would be prudent to go for fresh elections rather than persisting with the problem.

Navin Joshi
Battisputali

to be Nepalese, what is stopping us from sitting down together and finding a lasting solution to the country's problems. This is no time for politicking.

Lalit Gurung
Lagankhel

Public Loot

Your report on the defunct parliament was very apt (Consensus Or Confrontation Spotlight June 29). The tragic incidence at the Royal Palace and its aftermath has proved both ruling and opposition parties to be just pawns. Both are scared stiff of the vox populi, and dread the day they have to face the public. Delivering nothing to the public in the past decade but poverty and corruption, they are busy looting the nation's coffers. Without any alternative program, but throwing childish tantrums that a particular person should not be PM, the opposition goes on rampage, and holds the whole country to ransom as the initiation rites to join the gang of dacoits. Blind to the fact that public properties were accumulated at the expense of our blood, sweat and tears, the party of the people proudly accepts its destruction. When the same committee that thought the PM was guilty points a finger at its comrade, it does not bother the party to give a clean chit to the culprit. The MPs do not do the homework entrusted to them by the public, never enter the parliament for the whole session, and obstruct ordinary people going about their daily chores. Amongst the facilities enjoyed by these public looters, you forgot to mention their Pajeros, their mass pregnancy medication, unashamed attempts to increase their five lakh bonus supposedly for development of their constituency to 1 crore etc. I hold these looters responsible for driving the poor, innocent village people to desperation, making them easy prey for extremists.

Shukra Raj Acharya
Naya Bazaar, Kirtipur

Some Parliament

The unending duel between the opposition and the ruling parties and among ruling party members shows no sign of abetting. As such, there is no alternative to going for mid-term elections and getting fresh mandate ("Consensus Or Confrontation?", SPOTLIGHT, June 29). In fact, so many things have happened in the country after the last general election that it would be wiser to seek a fresh mandate from the sovereign people.

Kamal Bista
Kirtipur

Work, Or Else...

It is ridiculous that the MPs continue to enjoy their perks and benefits even as they refuse to sit down for the session ("Consensus Or Confrontation?" SPOTLIGHT, June 29). This kind of

practice is against basic economic discipline; you earn only if you work. By pocketing salaries without working, the MPs are sending the wrong message to the people. They must either work or refrain from taking the benefits. There should be no easy way in between.

Anup Shakya
Hattisar

Strong Points

The points raised in your cover story ("Consensus Or Confrontation?", SPOTLIGHT, June 29) were very strong. Although many may agree that instead of allowing the present dysfunctional parliament to continue it would be cheaper to go for mid-term elections, there is another angle of security, which your story has overlooked. The current security situation is not conducive for free, fair and peaceful elec-

tions. Before arriving at such situation, through dialogue with the Maoists, it would be futile to go for the yet another election that could again give rise to the same kind of problems we are hoping to avoid.

Shambhu Shrestha
Jamal

No End In Sight

I do not see any way out of the current political imbroglio ("Consensus Or Confrontation?" SPOTLIGHT, June 29). On one hand Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala is in no mood to step down, on the other, the opposition parties are ready to settle for nothing short of that. They are refusing to do anything other than demanding his resignation. The Maoists are having field day in the jungles. The much-revered monarchy is facing problems. So what is the way out? If we claim

60,000 Drug Addicts In Nepal

An estimated 60,000 people, most of them young men and women, are considered to have fallen victim to the menace of drug abuse, experts said. While more than half of that number lives in Kathmandu valley, the problem is reaching serious proportions in urban centers outside the capital, including Pokhara and Dharan. Organizations working to rehabilitate drug addicts said nearly 2,000 people use syringes to take in drugs. As most of these addicts share the same syringe in groups and indulge in unsafe sex, they are prone to the transmission of HIV/AIDS, studies said. The seriousness of drug abuse in Nepal came to the limelight after reports confirmed that even young members of the royal family had unrestricted access to drugs. *Compiled from reports.*

Opposition Sets Deadline For Koirala

The main opposition Unified Marxist-Leninist party has reiterated that the resignation of Prime Minister Girija



Nepal

Prasad Koirala was the only way out of the current political stalemate. Talking to reporters after the UML's parliamentary party meeting Sunday, UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal said the country's political problems should end by mid-July. He said the opposition parties would chalk out their strategies in parliament if their demands were not met by then. *Compiled from reports July 2.*

Panel Of Maoist Parties Formed

Nine Maoist parties active in the region have recently formed the Coordination Committee of Maoists Parties in South Asia (COMPOSA) with a view to strengthening functional unity among the ultra-left parties and further heighten the 'people's war' being launched in South Asia, Rajdhani daily reported Saturday. Four Maoist parties from India, three from Bangladesh and one each from Sri Lanka and Nepal are members of the committee. The committee also decided to coordinate their activities with Maoist parties in Peru, the Philippines and Turkey, a statement said. No details were given regarding the form of leadership and future action of the committee. But the committee has made an appeal to all "to take part in the struggle against the Indian expansionism." *Compiled from reports July 1.*

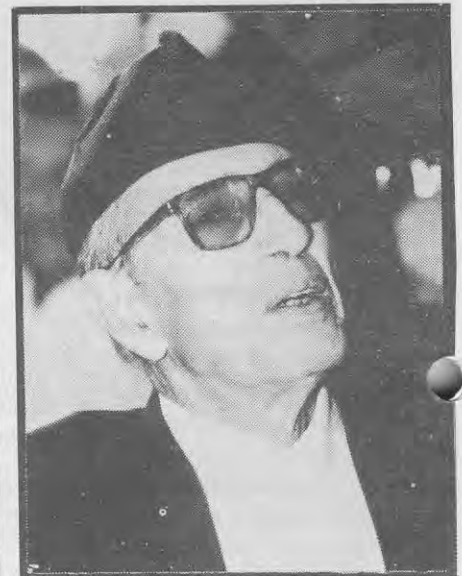
Five Policemen Killed In Tanahu

Within days of targeting three police posts in the mid-western district of Dang, nearly 200 armed rebels attacked and killed five policemen, including a junior police officer, in the western district of Tanahu, which Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Ram Chandra Poudel represents. According to police, hundreds of rebels surrounded and opened attack at a police post at Tekre village in remote Arunodaya VDC in the district late Friday. Some two

dozen policemen surrendered to the rebels after nearly two hours of gun battle. The rebels also took away 13 303 rifles and other arms and ammunitions from the post. A policeman seriously injured in the attacks was airlifted to the capital for treatment. In a separate incident, 10 people traveling in a truck went missing after it fell into the Trishuli River at Jyamireghat on the Prithvi highway after colliding with a motorcycle. *Compiled from reports.*

'Prime Minister May Resign'

In order to help pass the budget for the next fiscal year and the motion of thanks to His Majesty for delivering the government's policies and programs, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has agreed to resign from his post, Kantipur



Koirala

daily reported Sunday. In his meeting with the main opposition leader, Madhav Kumar Nepal, Friday evening, Koirala gave such indications, the report said quoting unnamed sources. Nepal even advised Koirala that he could again come back to the post if no one from his party succeeded in running the government smoothly. The opposition has been demanding Koirala's resignation as a precondition of 'national consensus.' The prime minister may have come to such a conclusion in order to save the country

from constitutional crisis, the report said. Meanwhile, in his address at a function organized to mark the first "Parliament Day" here Saturday, Premier Koirala did not give any indication of stepping down. "I will do everything to take my 14-point agenda for national consensus to a logical conclusion," he declared. *Compiled from reports.*

Nepal Files Candidacy For UNGA

For the first time in 46 years, Nepal has filed its nomination for the post of Vice chair at the forthcoming 56th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). For the three-member quota from the Asia Pacific region, Nepal is the only country from South Asia vying for the coveted post. An official at the Foreign Ministry here said Nepal has already started lobbying to get elected to the UNGC and has mobilized all its foreign missions for this purpose. A former elected member to the Security Council in 1967 and 1996, Nepal has also announced its candidacy for the all-important council for the year 2007. Similarly, it has also announced its candidacy for the post of chairman for UNGC for the year 2011. Nepal, which had joined the world body in 1955, has been contributing significantly in the UN's international peacekeeping operations for the last two decades. *Rajdhani June 27.*

FNCCI, CII Reach Agreement

The Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) have agreed to recommend to their respective governments not to impose any conditions for the goods to be exported from Nepal, the raw material of which may be either Nepalese or Indian. In their meeting in New Delhi late last month, both sides also agreed to ensure that there would be no negative impact on the items to be exported from Nepal to India with additional prices added to those manufactured with raw materials imported from third countries by paying



Shrestha

foreign currency. They also agreed to urge their respective governments to hold a joint meeting of the Nepal Bureau of Standards and the Bureau of Indian Standards and solve the problems of labora-

tory testing of foodstuff and medicines to be exported from Nepal and of quarantine. *RSS news agency report.*

Govt. To Import Sugar To Avoid Shortage

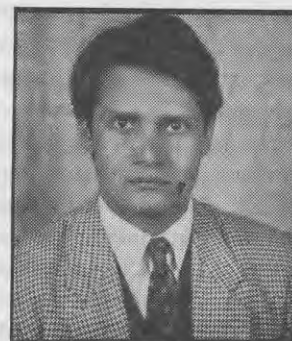
With two major festivals of the Nepalese, Dashain and Tihar, only a few months away, the government is working to import 50,000 tons of sugar from India, a daily newspaper reported Thursday. The government is also considering reversing a 40 percent duty slapped on the import of sugar in January 2000, the report said, quoting a senior official at the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies. Officials say Nepal is a sugar sufficient country with an average annual production of 140,000 tons. Total production last year, however, stood at 125,000 tons. The annual demand for sugar in Nepal is estimated at 175,000 tons.

Kantipur June 28. ■

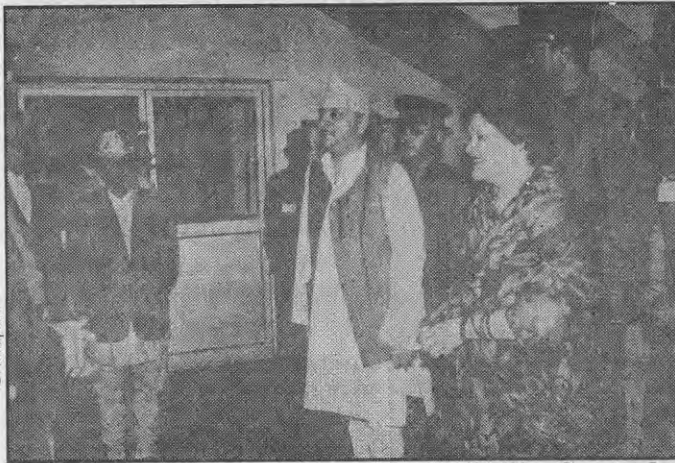
Adhikari Honored In New York

Ravi Adhikari, a Nepalese journalist based in New York, was awarded the prestigious South Asian Journalism Award amid a function last week. Adhikari received the award for his reporting on how the production and sales of footwear depicting Hindu gods had hurt the sentiments of Hindus living in the US and abroad. The award is set up at the Columbia University in New York from where the annual Pulitzer Prizes are given. The South Asian Journalists Association (SAJA), representing 800-plus journalists across the United States and Canada, established the award in 1994. Similarly, SAJA Journalism Leader Award was provided to Fareed Zakaria of Newsweek magazine. These annual awards recognize excellence in reporting about South Asia, as well as outstanding reporting by South Asian journalists and students in the United States and Canada. According to Nina Mehta, chair of the SAJA

awards committee, the SAJA Journalism Awards "are important since they recognize outstanding media coverage of a vital but under-covered region — the Indian subcontinent — and also honor creative work by journalists covering South Asians in North America, as well as outstanding reporting by South Asians." This year's contest received more than 200 entries from 100 media outlets for work done in 2000. The entries reflected the higher visibility of South Asians in the United States and the increased attention paid to the subcontinent, thanks, in part, to the first trip by a US president in 20 years.



Adhikari



Gurkhaputra

Queen Komal returning to her residence with King Gyanendra after she was discharged from Birendra Military hospital

KING GYANENDRA ADDRESSED A JOINT SESSION of parliament Friday amid unprecedented security. Royal Nepalese Army personnel were manning the parliament premises hours before the King's arrival. Security personnel checked all the dignitaries, including the prime minister and the deputy prime minister, using metal detectors. Government employees working in different ministries and departments within Singha Durbar were ordered to leave their office by 2pm Friday "due to security reasons." Chief of Nepal Police, Pradip Shumsher JB Rana and former army chiefs stood on full alert within the parliament throughout the royal address.

NEPAL AND INDIA HAVE AGREED TO STRENGTHEN cooperation to control terrorist and other unwarranted activities, a statement issued by the Royal Nepalese Embassy in New Delhi said. At the end of the fourth meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWG) in the Indian capital on June 29, officials from both countries agreed to begin expert-level discussions on a legal framework for cooperation in criminal and civil matters and to review extradition arrangements. The meeting appreciated the improvements in the security arrangements at the Tribhuvan International Airport and emphasized the need for early computerization of immigration facilities. The Nepalese delegation was headed by Joint Secretary at the Finance Ministry Tika Dutta Niraula and the Indian side by Joint Secretary at the Home Ministry of India, Surendra Kumar.

THE GOVERNMENT OF SWITZERLAND HAS AGREED to provide a grant assistance of about Rs 107.5 million to Nepalese government for the implementation of the third phase of the Arniko highway project. According to the Ministry of Finance, the grant assistance will be used mainly for the rehabilitation of the Surya Binayak-Dhulikhel section of the highway and for meeting the cost of preventive maintenance and small-scale engineering work on the 114.5km Barhabise-Kodari section. Finance Secretary Dr. Bimal Koirala and Resident Coordinator of the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation Anton Hagen signed the agreement in the capital last week.

THE UNDERGROUND MAOIST PARTY HAS ANNOUNCED that from now onwards it will target pro-G.P. Koirala Nepali Congress workers only. In a statement carried by the major dailies, the party said it would take action against its workers who target political activists belonging to other parties in defiance of the central directives. The party's strategy is seen as an effort to harass supporters of Prime Minister Koirala within the ruling party and isolate him from the opposition as well as from the dissident group within the Nepali Congress.

ALL THE OPPOSITION PARTIES REPRESENTED IN parliament filed proposals seeking to amend the government's programs and policies presented on Friday. CPN-UML, Rastriya Prajatantra Party, Nepal Sadbhawana Party, National People's Front, United People's Front and Nepal Workers and Peasants' Party filed their proposals at the parliament secretariat. The house started debate on the royal address from Monday.

FOUR MEMBERS OF A FAMILY WERE KILLED IN A landslide at Jyrbang of Namla VDC in the western district of Lamjung Saturday night. According to police, Mana Bahadur B.K. along with his wife and two children died in the disaster. Police said a relief team had left for the site of the incident. ■

Accidents Take Toll

With the onset of monsoon, the roads are proving very dangerous as a series of fatal accidents have taken place. On Saturday, June 30, a motorbyke and a truck collided near Gajuri, Dhading with both skidding off and plunging into the swollen Trishuli river. Eight persons travelling in the truck went missing while a couple of them were taken to hospital after sustaining serious injuries. A few days ago on June 26, a bus carrying a heavy load of passengers fell down 40 meters below the road near Sisneri in Kakani, killing two persons on the spot while one more died in hospital. The bus was carrying the UML's representatives of local bodies, who were coming to Kathmandu from Nuwakot district to cast their vote for the National Assembly election. Every year during the monsoon season the frequency of fatal accidents increase thanks to unstable road conditions. The landslides and flood triggered by the torrential rainfall make it difficult for vehicles to ply during the season in most parts of the country; particularly the hilly region that makes up the 68 percent of the country's total area. Meanwhile, the Krishnabhir section at the Prithvi Highway is once again experiencing frequent obstructions due to the recurring landslide. Although the heavy equipments like dozers, excavators etc have been working there continuously to prevent it, the landslide have not ceased. As this highway is the busiest one linking the valley with rest of the country, any obstruction here means great discomfort to passengers.

"I will take my 14-point proposal [for national consensus] to its logical end. This is my commitment."

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, speaking at a public program, in Kantipur.

* * *

"When the tenure of the probe committee formed by the King could be extended, why can't we extend the deadline for the prime minister to resign? If Koirala is willing to resign, we are willing to wait a few more days. But if he is not, we will not leave him."

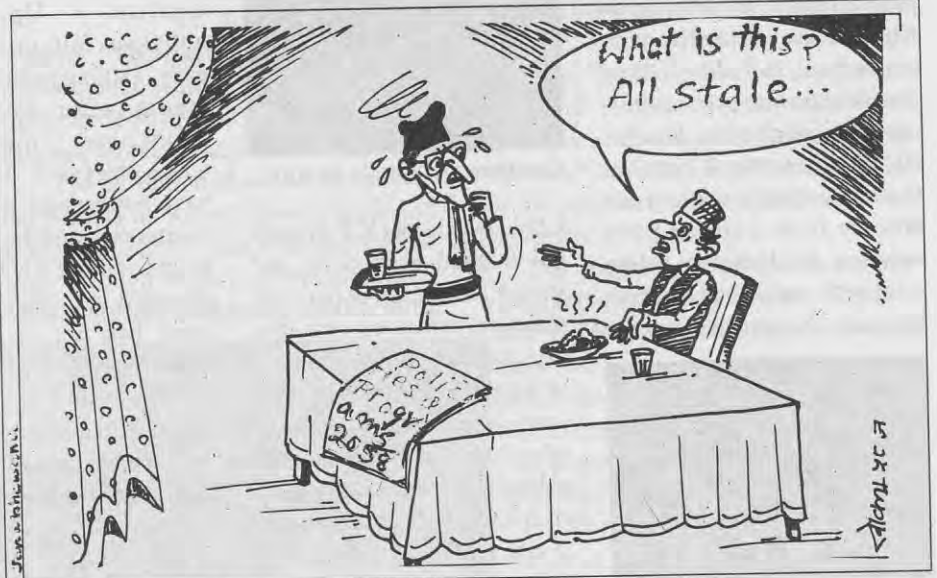
Madhav Kumar Nepal, leader of the main opposition, in Rajdhani.

* * *

"It is not democracy but Girijababu who has failed."

Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, former prime minister and senior leader of Nepali Congress, speaking at a program organized by the Democracy and Good Governance Study Center.

* * *



problem, the government is ever ready to talk with them."

Ram Chandra Poudel, Deputy Prime Minister, in Nepal Samacharpatra.

* * *

the royal palace."

Yogi Naraharinath, saying that alcohol only encourages immorality, in Ghatana Ra Bichar.

* * *

"If the Maoists want to resolve this

"Alcohol should not be allowed inside

"You will not find any incident in Nepal's history bigger in magnitude than this royal tragedy."

Dr. Tulsi Ram Baidya, president of Nepal History Association, in Budhabar.

* * *

"Immediately after hearing the news, the Indian President telephoned me. There was a great pain in his voice."

Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, Royal Nepalese Ambassador to India, saying that the Indian government had readied a special plane to fly Indian leaders including President K.R. Narayanan to Kathmandu to take part in the King Birendra's last rite, in Bimarsha.

* * *



Bhattarai's Bafflement

Former prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai seems to have lost his political patience after his nominee for a seat in the upper house of parliament, Dr Narayan Khadka, was rejected by party colleagues, including fellow dissident former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. Bhattarai's sense of humiliation may partly explain his absence from a crucial party meeting held at the prime minister's residence later in the week. Discomposure seems

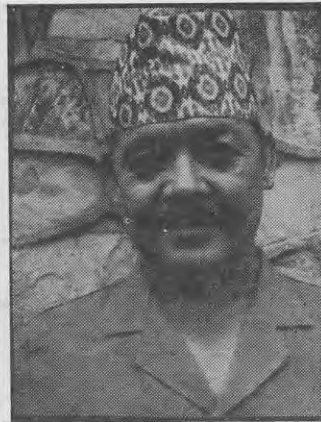


Bhattarai : Snubbed

to have gripped Bhattarai to such an extent that he even failed to vote properly during the upper house elections last week. He canceled his first ballot paper and managed to do things properly on the second try.

Renewed Ties

When two die-hard rivals of Nepal's communist movement are found sharing the dais and exchanging personal pleasantries, the gesture is bound to send political ripples. When CPN-ML general secretary Bam Dev Gautam and



Gautam : Comrade in arms

CPN-UML leader K.P. Sharma Oli hugged each other and started talking about personal manners, onlookers were simply startled. When Gautam broke away from the UML two years ago, he cited, among other things, Oli's anti-national policies. Ever since the split, each leader has fired thousands of salvos against the other. Few seemed to understand what might have prompted the two comrades to lock themselves in an embrace in public. The obvious question: does the gesture indicate an emerging realignment of political forces.

Height And Distance

Ordinarily, the height of an individual does not determine the qualities of an individual. In Nepalese politics, however, shorter persons have found a greater role than taller ones. Former RPP leader Rajeshwor Devkota and UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal, among other physically short leaders, have made their mark with their own qualities. They do not miss any chance of boosting the height of their performance. However, it seems shortness has caused psychological pressure in some individuals. If one reads

a statement given by CIAA chief Suryanath Upadhyaya, one easily sensed streaks of an inferiority complex. When he was summoned to register his statement at an inquiry commission led by the taller Dr. Bhola Chalise, Upadhyaya felt uneasy. Talking to the media after his deposition, the CIAA chief said, "I have not become a shorter man and the height of those who recorded my statement has not increased." Was Upadhyaya so burdened with questions of biology while formulating his answers to the panel?



Shrestha : Victory in defeat

of the Panchayat days, could have lost his clout in the Rastriya Prajatantra Party. But that reality was reflected in the recently concluded elections to the upper house of

parliament. Although Shrestha is still one of the popular politicians of the capital, he lost his base in the RPP because he has been out of power for too long. Come to think of it, at a time when party president Surya Bahadur Thapa is in command, who would want to follow Jogmehar Dai? ■

Power Worship

Worship of power seems to be one of the enduring characteristics of Nepalese politics. Few believed Jog Mehar Shrestha, a heavyweight poli-

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MONARCHY

Anchor Of Stability

The crown is vital to Nepal's political stability, a fact the early days of King Gyanendra's reign have amply underscored

By KESHAB POUDEL

Although the institution of monarchy has suffered a major setback after the death of the immediate family of King Birendra on the fateful night of June 1, 2001, the first few weeks of King Gyanendra's reign have shown the new monarch's mature leadership skills.

Experienced and efficient, King Gyanendra has a major responsibility in stabilizing Nepal and the institution of monarchy, which has earned a special place in the hearts of the Nepalese people. In his first major decision, the nomination of three members to the upper house, King Gyanendra has provided a glimpse of how he intends to uphold the finest traditions of the Shah dynasty. By nominating prominent, respected and non-controversial figures to the National Assembly, King Gyanendra has proved that he is in touch with the pulse of the people.

King Gyanendra nominated Dr. Koop Jyoti, Yankela Sherpa and Dipt Prakash Shaha to the upper house. All three are known for their competence in their respective fields and represent different ethnic groups.

At a time when King Gyanendra is making efforts to instil a sense of political stability in the country, a section within the ruling Nepali Congress and some other forces are toeing the line advanced by the republican Maoists to destabilize the monarchy.

The monarchy and the Royal Nepalese Army have played a crucial role in the unification of Nepal and in protecting national independence in difficult times of history. "The ethnic and other stability of Nepal cannot remain intact without the institution of monarchy," says historian Dr. Tulsi Ram

Vaidya. "This fact and importance of monarchical institution have been well understood by all powerful external and internal forces in the course of history."

The institution of monarchy has seen such kings as Rana Bahadur Shah and Rajendra Bikram Shah who had to navigate through highly turbulent times. Monarchs like Mahendra and Birendra



King Gyanendra : Symbol of unity

established themselves as competent and efficient leaders at crucial moments of modern history. The defining feature of the institution has always been a dynamism that has injected a sense of stability among the people. Even in the aftermath of such a major tragedy in the royal palace, the monarchy has played a leading role in restoring normalcy to the country.

"The monarchy has often played the role of a safety valve of society against the threat of imperialism and native radicalism without being socially conservative in its ideology. This is the reason social change in Nepal often occurred in a spiral manner. Yet, the geniuses of monarchs are full of dramatic contrast based on the individual personality of kings: some were powerful and assertive, while others were mere figureheads. Quite a few of them were captive of local aristocracy and some even upheld an image of constitutional monarch," says Dev Raj Dahal, professor of political science at Tribhuvan University.

The weakening of the monarchy would serve nobody's interest. The faction-ridden political parties, which have just a five-decade history cannot match the contributions of the monarchy. If the monarchy collapses, no one can prevent the instability that will spill over across the border.

"Who can act as a conscience-keeper of the nation when the institution of monarchy is drastically weakened by an ordeal as the present one while national political parties and elite are sharply divided along geo-political lines lacking an anchor and purposive direction?" asks Dahal.

Unlike other parts of the region, the monarchy remains an immense source of inspiration to the different ethnic groups of Nepal. "The institution of monarchy has history of continuity and wide acceptability in Nepal. This is the reason why, in all kinds of situation, the institution injects a sense of stability," says Dr. Vaidya.

There is no reason why responsible leaders of major political parties committed to constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy to destabilize an institution that has such a long and illustrious history. Instead of indulging in petty politics, this is the time politicians should be backing up their professed commitment to the nation by supporting the consolidation of the monarchy. ■

GOVT.'S POLICY AND PROGRAMS Lacking New Direction

The government puts emphasis on security and development measures but fails to properly package and sell its program

By BHAGIRATH YOGI

Amid unprecedented and tight security, when King Gyanendra arrived at the Parliament House on Friday afternoon he was accorded full royal honor. Within minutes, he was delivering the royal address that outlined the policies and programs of His Majesty's Government for the next fiscal year 2001-02.

Addressing the joint session of the parliament, the new monarch expressed

last week, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala had proposed a 14-point agenda as a basis for such consensus. The government would award top priority to strengthening law and order in the country, said His Majesty.

Though the monarch did not mention anything about the six-year-old Maoist movement that has already claimed lives of more than 1,700 people, according to official figures, King Gyanendra said his government would continue efforts to accommodate people into development

"The government has tried to interlink the concept of internal security with the overall development of the country," said Dr. Jagdish Chandra Pokhrel, member of National Planning Commission. "As such, besides the overall national outlook, transitional zones and hard-hit areas have been identified where the security will be provided accordingly."

King Gyanendra also recalled the last state visit paid by late King Birendra to China and official visit to Japan by late Crown Prince Dipendra early this year. His Majesty said HMG would continue to maintain cordial relations with the neighboring countries and lauded the contribution of international community in Nepal's development endeavors.

The policy document, which comes as a continuity to earlier policies, lacks coherence, said critics. "There is nothing new in this address and the government has failed to give any new policy direction," said Madhav Kumar Nepal, leader of the main opposition in the parliament. Added vice chairman of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party, Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani, "The document lacks any commitment to implement the policies professed by the government itself."

Countered Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, in a TV interview, "The policy document, by nature, is not an exhaustive document. Its only a forward-looking document."

Officials insist that the government is moving in the right direction and the latest document has made attempts to further clarify and focus government's efforts for poverty reduction and development "Though average economic growth of around 5 percent is not bad for a non-industrialized country like Nepal, what we have seen is that the macro-policy framework adopted by us has been able to yield equity at the regional and social level," said Dr. Pokhrel. "So, we are going to introduce area-wise planning and with focus on district development plans."

Analysts point out that there have been some contradictions in the government's approach outlined in the policy document. "How can you talk of rehabilitating sick industries when the



King Gyanendra addressing Parliament : Commitment to democracy

his commitment to constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy and recalled the contributions made by his elder brother, late King Birendra, in national development.

"My government would award priority for developing national consensus on dealing with the burning problems facing the country," said King Gyanendra. Only

mainstream who give up the path of violence. There were no details. He said the government would implement Integrated Security and Development Program (ISDP) effectively. The Koirala government has been implementing the program from early this year in seven Maoist insurgency affected districts in western and mid-western Nepal.

Highlights of the Govt's Policy and Programs:

- Voters I-D cards will be distributed in additional 60 parliamentary constituencies in 40 districts.
- Poverty alleviation will be given top priority on the basis of mid-term review of the Ninth Five Year plan.
- Headquarters of additional five districts to be connected by road network.
- Recommendations of the Public Expenditure Review Commission (PERC) will be gradually implemented.
- Foreign aid will be utilized in an effective way.
- Banks and financial institutions will be strengthened; their restructuring and reforms programs will be continued.
- The use of goods manufactured within the country will be encouraged.
- Special program will be implemented to rehabilitate the sick industries.
- Industries will be provided with adequate security.
- Participation of civil society would be encouraged in improving the management of the government-run schools. Private schools will be monitored closely.
- Implementation of Agriculture Perspective Plan will be made effective.
- Special program will be introduced for the promotion of tourism.
- Foreign employment program will be expanded.
- Implementation of Melanchi drinking water project will be expedited.
- Development of Information Technology will be given priority.
- Role of Royal Nepalese Army in the total national security will be made more effective.
- A Royal Nepalese Embassy will be set up in Denmark as part of the government's policy to strengthen relations with the Scandinavian countries.
- Efforts to set up UN Peacekeeping Regional Center in Nepal will be expedited.
- Efforts will be made to expedite the process of verification of Bhutanese refugees so as to ensure early repatriation of the refugees.

overall direction of the government has been guided by open and liberal economic policies?" asked Dr. Badri Prasad Shrestha, a senior economist. "The government should give emphasis on promoting competitiveness of the Nepalese industries and facilitating integration of our economy into the global one."

Similarly, the government has failed to identify problems related to implementation of the long-term Agriculture Perspective Plan and address them. The Agriculture Ministry lacks a full time minister for quite sometime now and there is serious lack of coordination between different ministries and departments, reports say.

Of course, there has been strong commitment on part of the government to implement the recommendations made by the Public Expenditure Review Commission (PERC) early this year. The government is planning to cut down the number of 'unsustainable' projects, scrap and integrate some offices at the regional and

district level and cut down expenses on pension and gratuity, among others, officials said.

The policy document said the government would work to link the district headquarters of five more districts by road within the next fiscal year. With this, 65 out of 75 district headquarters in the country will have road connections.

Besides developing infrastructure, the government continues to give top emphasis on poverty reduction. The mid-term review of the Ninth Five Year Plan, which is yet to be made public, claims that there have been some marginal achievement in the efforts toward reducing incidence of poverty. If this is the case, the government will have to consolidate its efforts and mobilize local bodies and civil society to sustain such efforts.

The most important task for the government, however, would be to improve deteriorating law and order in the country, contain Maoist insurgency and provide security to the industry and businesses.

The future course of the country will depend very much on whether the government succeeds in these fronts. Of course, political instability and minimum consensus among the political parties will be equally crucial for the government to implement its own policy document. ■

BUDGET 2001 Outlining Priorities

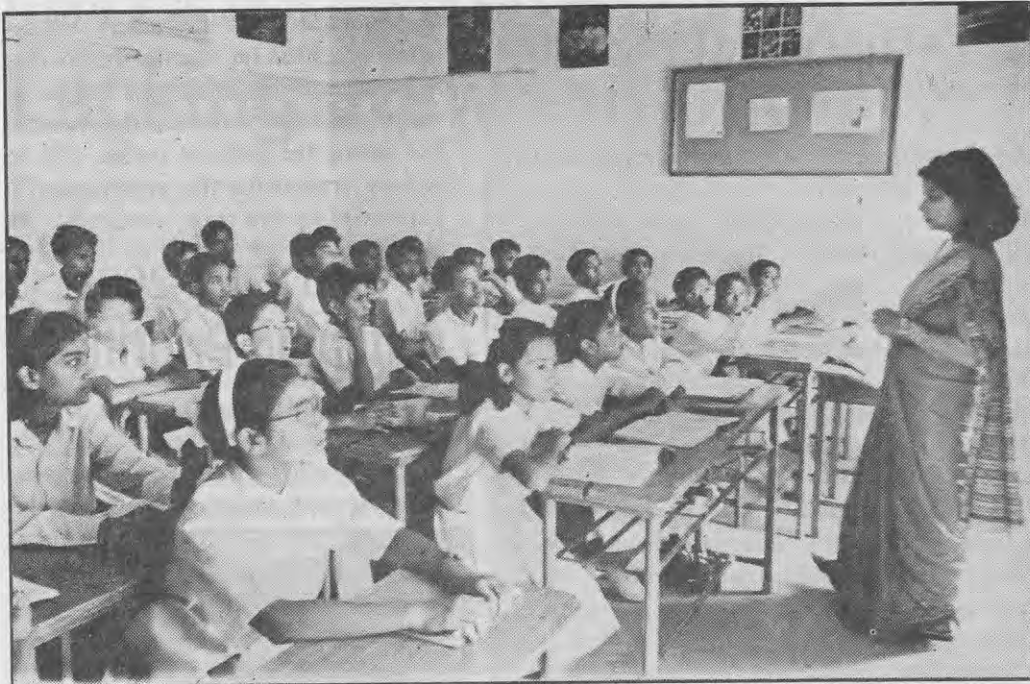
Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat has said the budget for the year 2001-02 would be realistic, yet focusing on addressing major problems in the



Mahat

economy. Talking to members of the Society of Economic Journalists of Nepal (SEJON) Monday, Dr. Mahat said the forthcoming budget would focus on poverty reduction,

revival of domestic industries, financial sector reform and maintaining fiscal discipline. The Minister said the budget would bring all the poverty alleviation programs under the same umbrella and see to it that they are result oriented. New programs would be announced to reform state-owned banks, finance companies and other financial institutions, he said. In order to revive the domestic industry, the budget would ask the government offices to buy locally produced goods. Admitting that there had been difficulties in realizing the targets of revenue mobilization in the current fiscal year, Dr. Mahat said no ambitious programs would be announced in the upcoming budget. "This should, however, not mean that there will be no new programs," he clarified. The minister said the budget would also introduce programs to encourage Information Technology (IT) sector, said Dr. Mahat. ■



Students of private school : Will the report affect them?

EDUCATION PANEL REPORT A Hornet's Nest

The government-formed committee irks private-school operators by recommending an end to the registration of schools owned by individuals

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

As it was formed in the backdrop of unrest in the education sector triggered by the school closure forced by the Maoist-affiliated All Nepal National Free Students Union (ANNFSU-Revolutionary), the report from the government-formed committee, headed by Nirmal Prasad Pandey, member of the National Planning Commission (NPC), was eagerly awaited.

But its contents proved irritating to the private sector as it was silent about their future. Already feeling the heat from the ANNFSU-R's movement that demanded they slash fees by as much as 50 percent, the privately owned schools now face similar behavior from the government side if the report is implemented, say education experts.

The report, among other things, rec-

ommends the creation of two categories of schools - community-run and institutional. The report urges the government to recognize only these categories of schools.

It does not clarify the status of thousands of private schools operating in the country. About 95 percent of private schools are owned by individuals or groups. "We have suggested that such private schools now seek registration from the concerned ministry by changing themselves into institutions," said Chuman Singh Basnet, director-general of the Department of Education, a member of the committee.

But the committee's recommendation that individuals may not open school is against the basic spirit of democracy and liberal economy, say experts. "If the government thinks that private schools are making money, they can impose taxes

on a progressive rate. Why bar individuals from opening schools?" asks an educationist.

"The report has not taken up our recommendations. Its stand regarding private schools looks very dubious," says Rajesh Khadka, president of the Private and Boarding Schools Organization of Nepal (PABSON).

That apart, the committee's report also recommends the complete abolition of fees up to the primary level. It also recommends that the fee structure of institutional (private) schools be in line with those run by the community. "By dividing the total cost by the number of students, we can get the unit cost. The unit cost should be the basis for charging fees. As far as institutional schools are concerned,

the report suggests that their fee be also based on the unit cost of community-run schools with the provision of adding extra overhead cost depending on the facilities they provide," says Basnet.

There are more than 8,000 private schools across the country with a total enrolment of one million students. Billions of rupees have been invested in these schools.

After the Maoist-affiliated student unions closed down schools for one whole week a month and a half ago, the government had formed the committee to submit recommendations to clear off the existing problems in the education sector.

The report has recommended that children school (nursery, kindergarten level) be run by local organizations like the Village Development Committee or city development council. Likewise, it suggests the District Development Committee should run primary schools (from classes 1-5).

"They might as well have recommended National Assembly or House of Representatives members to run the secondary level schools," says PABSON's Khadka, criticizing the report. "It has only created new jobs for politicians."

Other experts, too, see the report as flawed. "It is a populist document full of

gimmicks. In the current political economy, this report will definitely retard the growth of private schools," says educationist Dr. Min Bahadur Bista. He says that although there is a need to regulate private schools, that cannot be achieved through diktat.

"Private schools cannot flourish in a controlled environment where the government dictates the curriculum or the fee. The current report tries to invite bureaucratic intervention, which could adversely affect healthy competition," says Dr. Bista. "Until there is a sound public education system, parents will continue to look to the private sector. Therefore, in the current scenario, the private schools will continue to exist."

Another point of contention is the introduction of community-run schools. "Though it is a good idea, one must first look at the practicality of it. Are the communities prepared to manage schools?" asks another educationist.

On the other hand, Dr. Bista objects to the conditions put forth by the committee before the school management. "The report asks the government to take care of financing, curriculum, fees and teacher-selection. This is against the very spirit of community schools," he says.

'We Have Tried To Inject A Feeling Of Community Ownership'

— CHUMAN SINGH BASNET

CHUMAN SINGH BASNET, director-general of the Department of Education, was one of the members of the committee that presented the report. Excerpts from his interview with SPOTLIGHT:

How has the committee defined educational institutions?

The report divides schools in two categories — community-run and institutional. The community-run schools can be of two types, those receiving government subsidies and those that are not. The term institutional schools has been coined to replace the private schools. The report suggests that certain registered institutions and not individuals run the private schools.

What are its major recommendations?

The report recommends the total abolition of fees up to primary level schools. Let there be no charge for examinations or any other thing. It tries to inject a feeling of community ownership. Earlier, they were called government schools. Now the report recommends calling them community schools so that the public will feel a sense of ownership.

Private schools claim the report has neglected their role.

The report merely urges private schools to change their organizational identity and come forward as institutional ones.

What about the fees they can charge?

The institutional schools, too, should charge the unit cost in line with the community ones. But the report suggests categorizing institutional schools, too, according to their physical infrastructure and facilities. Such overhead costs can be added to the unit cost while determining fees. ■



On their way to school : Destination under uncertainty?

"There should have been some cost-sharing arrangements as well as freedom of management."

Dr. Bista goes to the extent of describing them as pseudo-community schools. "The situation today is not like that of pre-1971 when there was total public schools. I think the committee made a very weak analysis of the current situation."

Apart from these contentious points, the committee has attempted to raise some genuine concerns of the education sector. It has tried to delve into the definition of schools, fee structure teacher's licensing system and many other points of discord. Its 15-point recommendation has been submitted to the Ministry of Education. It remains to be seen how the government reacts to the report and, more importantly, whether implementing its recommendations would resolve the problems faced by the sector. ■

NIKE Kathmandu Connection

The global sport goods firm becomes the latest big brand to open shop in the city

By AKSHAY SHARMA

“An evening walk through Durbar Marg, with its elegant shops, boutiques, food chains and etiquette customers, makes you feel like you are somewhere in the West,” says Pradip Tamang. “Especially when the weather is clear, the place looks like a city in Switzerland.”

Nike, the world-famous sports goods firm, is the latest big brand to blend into Durbar Marg. “Perhaps this is the first time



Nike showroom : Just do it!

in Nepal that a big brand like this has opened. However, the Nepal bandhs, the Black Friday at the royal palace and events after that haven't given us the pick-up we want,” says Rahul Dhanua who manages the outlet. “I don't have to tell you about the market conditions these days. Because of this, we have not been able to calculate the number of visitors we've had.”

“A watch that costs Rs 20,790, a T-shirt that goes for Rs 490, a pair of sneakers costing Rs 6,790 and a bag carrying a price tag of Rs 12,790—all this is bound to catch you in a spell,” said a shopper.

When the French novelist Marcel Proust said the regularity of habit is generally in proportion to its absurdity, he probably did not have today's rampant consumerism in mind. In today's buyer's market,

however, literary admonitions do not seem to stand in the way of transactions.

Nevertheless, there are skeptical voices. “I visited the place and items were pretty expensive,” says Amir Ratna Tuladhar of Ason, who has a shop at Kamlakshi. “The stuff that we sell is very cheap compared to the prices there. Nike products are made in countries with low labor costs but command brand loyalty. What I sell are also made in many of these same countries. As an informed consumer, therefore, I am forced to think, ‘Why should I buy goods that look exactly the same as the others but are so expensive?’”

Big brands do not decide to enter new markets without doing their homework properly. “Nike produces so many products and many have their own websites on the Internet,” says a market analyst.

Nike was regarded by the ancient Greeks to be the goddess of speed. The company specializes in sports-related products. “The brand name speaks for itself,” explains the store's Sudhir Serchan. “Our aim is to catch the eyes of local customers more than focusing on tourists.”

Rahul says: “We offer quality and do not sell any duplicate products. People come here looking for originality. The reaction we have been getting now looks good. People say they find good stuff here.” He adds: “We don't offer discount and our focus is in giving the consumer what they want along with quality.”

Asked whether he expected competitors to come in anytime soon, Rahul says: “We can't make any firm predictions now, but we are anticipating a better market. The idea will probably pick up. Nike has big competitors like Addidas and Reebok.”

If and when those competitors decide to enter the Nepalese market, Nike will

CELLULAR PHONE Private Player In The Offing

A joint venture company is all set to offer cellular mobile services

Khetan group, a leading business and industrial house in the country, is planning to offer cellular mobile services in the country by November this year. The group registered Spice Cell Nepal Pvt. Ltd, a joint venture with Spice Cell of Modi Telestra India, at the Department of Industry here Thursday. The company, in which Spice Cell has 60 percent share and Khetan Group 40 percent equity, had earlier planned to offer cellular services by July this year but had to postpone its plans amidst legal tangle. The Supreme Court is to hear a petition early next week in which employees of the state-owned Nepal Telecommunications Corporation (NTC) have challenged the government decision to award license to offer cellular mobile services to the private sector. The Khetan Group was awarded the contract to operate cellular mobile phones within the country through a competitive bidding in November last year. Managing director of the Khetan Group Rajendra Khetan, said the services offered by the private sector company would be quite affordable and the total cost would not exceed Rs 15,000 (approx. 210 US dollars). Added Mandeep Bhatia, VP, Strategic Business Development, Spice Communications Limited, The new company would like to cater the cell phones to anybody who will feel its need. In fact, we would also offer a range of services along with our mobile phones. He did not give details. If the legal hurdle is sorted out soon, it can be hoped that the mobile phones will no longer remain a matter of luxury for a large section of the Nepalese. ■

probably find itself making adjustments to its operations. But for now, the shop is open from 10 am to 8 pm every day except Saturday, when it open from 12 pm to 8 pm. ■



SPOTLIGHT FAMILY

Offers loyal felicitations to

His Majesty

King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev

on His Majesty's

55th Auspicious Birthday.

May Pashupatinath grant him a long

and healthy life to guide the nation

TOURISM Between Hope And Despair

Tourist arrivals last month hit their lowest mark in a decade. Is this decline a reason to worry about the future of tourism or is it just a temporary phenomenon? Amid the gloom that has descended on the industry after some airlines scaled back their flights to Nepal, there also are some signs of hope. The nation needs to make vigorous attempts to transform this glimmer into gain. If Nepal succeeds in cashing in on the international media coverage it has received during these past few weeks and takes advantage of the Chinese government's selection of Nepal as an outbound tourist destination, our tourism sector can hope to regain much of its luster. But does the country have the political will to match its entrepreneurial zeal?

By KESHAB POUDEL

Sanu Kancha Shrestha, an administrative assistant at a travel and tour office, is worried about his future. As someone who considered himself a privileged employee until now, Shrestha is uncertain about how to cope with the days ahead. "My manager has already warned me that I may lose my job if things do not improve in the coming season," Shrestha said.

There are many others in the tourism industry, including hoteliers and executives, who share Shrestha's anxiety about the future of Nepal's tourism industry. Although normalcy has returned to the country after the mysterious killings at royal palace, some Indian, Spanish and Italian groups have cancelled their reservations for June and July. Moreover, the decision of some airlines to reduce their flights has created a new sense of panic in the tourism sector. Rumors of political

instability and the fact that tourist arrivals last month recorded their lowest level in a decade have sent shock waves among employees at hotels, airlines, trekking and travel workers.

At a time when many remain alarmed by the bleak scenario of the Nepalese tourism industry, there are some indicators of recovery. If Nepal takes timely steps to benefit from the publicity the country has received in the international media and finalizes the agreement to cater to the Chi-



Tourists : Walking safely down the street

ganization, the number of Chinese holidaying overseas will soar from the current 10 million a year to 50 million by 2010 and to 100 million by 2020. This will make China the leading source of tourist world-wide, and will provide an important boost for many Asian countries like Nepal.

China started letting its people out slowly but today the door is opened pretty wide. Travel visas were first granted for Hong Kong and Macau in the mid-1980s, and they went mostly to the wealthy and well connected. Then came Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines and North Korea. Last year, Australia and New Zealand were

added as destinations. Japan and Nepal were recently identified the latest outbound countries for Chinese.

According to tourist arrivals and expenditure figures, the average Chinese tourist in Thailand outspent his counterpart from Malaysia, South Korea, Taiwan and remarkably even Japan. The Chinese also spent more per head than visitors from any European country.

As Nepal is sandwiched between two Asian giants, India and China, its tourism industry has the opportunity of exploiting both markets. As Indian tourists are one of the mainstays of Nepal, the arrival of Chinese tourists will come as yet another advantage.

At a time when tourism infrastructure, including hotel beds, airlines and travel agencies, is growing, Nepal has to attract more foreign tourists. When the northern neighbor is willing to send its tourists to Nepal, the policymakers need to take immediate matching steps.

Nepal has many attractions for Chinese tourists, including Buddhist temples and vast scenic wonders. The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation is yet to finalize documents to pave the way for the arrival of Chinese tourists.

"We will finalize the proposal as soon as the ministry prepares the draft," a senior official at the ministry says. "We need to do more home work before signing the final agreement with the Chinese government. It will take another couple of years before Chinese tourists start flowing in."

As the ministry does not have a full-time minister, few expect it would be able to prepare a final proposal soon. This has irked those in the industry. "I don't understand the reason behind the delay in signing the final agreement with China," says an exasperated tourism entrepreneur on condition of anonymity. "The Chinese want to give something to us but we are snubbing their offers. As a recipient country, it is our duty to take the initiative."

Tourist Arrivals : According to data analyzed by Nepal Tourism Board, the first five months of this year were satisfactory despite the unfavorable situation, including strikes, bandhs and violent activities. In January 2001, 25,905 tourists visited Nepal, 32.65 percent more than in the previous year. February and March also witnessed 10.79 and 10.25 percent increase in tourist arrivals. In April, arrivals declined by 5.52 percent over the previous year. May was also satisfactory, as the number of tourists increased by 5.75 percent.

The arrival of Indian tourists also increased over four of the five months recorded. In January, February and March, Indian tourist arrivals increased by 25.84 percent, 18.22 percent and 0.84 percent respectively.

In April, the numbers declined by 4.70 percent in comparison to the year 2000. May saw a 12.62 percent increase in the arrival of Indian tourists. On average, tourist arrivals over the five months saw an increase of 9.14 percent. The total number of tourists was 156,411, including 35,040 Indians. In 2000, 144,099 arrived, of which 32,105 were from India.

Arrivals suddenly declined by more than 50 percent in June following the killings in the royal palace. "At a time when

nese tourists, this bleak scenario could soon give way to hope.

If tourist arrivals from January to May are any indication, Nepal's tourism industry has good prospects. "There is no reason to worry about the future as the decline in tourist arrivals in June was only a temporary phenomenon. Nepal's tourism sector will get back on the right track as usual," says Prasadha Bahadur Pandey, a leading tourism entrepreneur.

Chinese Tourists : Nepal may have good opportunity to boost its economy by tapping the Chinese tourist market. China's burgeoning middle class, eager to see the world, is flooding Asia's tourist spots. Relaxed regulations, rising income levels and increased leisure time have produced a boom in the Chinese travel industry. Millions of ordinary Chinese go abroad every year. The numbers are set to explode, creating a phenomenon that will likely change the face of tourism in Asia and beyond.

According to the World Tourism Or-

the country suffered from such a tragedy and hostile publicity by the international media, how could have one expected better numbers that month?" asks Birendra Bahadur Basnet, managing director of Buddha Air. "Moreover, if the country's mainstream political parties work to restore peace and stability, things can pick up."

In the first two weeks of June, Tribhuvan International Airport wore a virtually deserted look. By the third week, there was a gradual recovery.

As the behavior of leaders of political parties, hotel union workers and other groups are unpredictable, no one is certain about the future. Although Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has already called for a moratorium against any kind of bandh for

10 years in his 14-point national consensus agenda, no party has made that pledge.

Reduction of Flights : The decision by some airlines to reduce the frequency of their flights to Nepal indicates that Nepal's market is still unstable. Indian Airlines have already scaled back their flights to Kathmandu. Some airlines have started flying smaller aircraft.

Nepal's image as a safe tourist destination is also gradually eroding because of the escalation of Maoist violence in various parts of the country. Although the Maoists have not attacked tourists, they are most active in some of the popular tourist destinations. The security concerns of tourists is understandable.

For their part, the Maoist leadership in

a recent statement indicated that they would not target foreign tourists. If other mainstream political parties make a commitment that they would not organize destructive acts like bandhs, the situation will definitely improve. "In a situation when everyone is expressing their concern for tourism, there is nothing to worry for the coming season," says Pandey.

As the Chinese government has already declared Nepal as an outbound destination, the country's tourism industry may benefit from it. Because of inefficiency and negligence on the part of Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Nepal risks missing a big opportunity.

When foreign airlines are reducing their flights, Royal Nepal Airlines, the country's only flag carrier is mired in controversy. Because of intervention from different sectors, the airline has not been able to step in the space made by foreign airlines.

"There is a need to strengthen the national flag carrier by making it more reliable and efficient," says Pandey. "How can one expect a tourist boom without having a reliable and efficient national airline?"

As RNAC is mired in controversy over the leasing aircraft one after another, Nepal's tourism industry is forced to rely on foreign airlines. Until a few years back, RNAC carried more than 40 percent of tourists to Nepal, a proportion that has fallen by many points. Apart from regional airlines flying in tourists, a big chunk of what tourists spend goes to the neighboring country.

Foreign Currency Earnings : According to the economic survey of 2000, Nepal earned Rs. 16,160,780,000 equivalent to foreign currency in fiscal year 1998\1999. However, the first six months of 1999\2000 saw a slump. The first six months of 2000\2001 was satisfactory. There are more than 100 star hotels, 700 non-star hotels.

There are more than 33,000 beds, which are increasing at a rate of 8.6 percent each year. Nepal has sufficient infrastructure to cash in on tourists in two main cities, Kathmandu and Pokhara.

Current occupancy levels at the hotels are drastically low, at an average of 20

'Indian Airlines' Decision Doesn't Seem To Be Based On Market Trends'

— TEK CHANDRA POKHAREL

TEK CHANDRA POKHAREL is one of the renowned tourism entrepreneurs of the country. A former president of Nepal Association of Travel Agents, Pokharel spoke to SPOTLIGHT on various issues related to the present situation in the tourism sector. Excerpts:

How do you see the ongoing trend in the tourism sector?

Well, it is not as bad as it is being projected. Definitely the number of tourists has declined in the month of June, but a recovery is under way. As our base is very small, any kind of disturbance can easily affect us. When you have such an unimaginable event occurring in the country, how can you expect better results in the tourism sector. We were in a period of great shock and horror.

You mean the decline in tourist arrivals is not that serious?

If you see it in terms of percentage, the decline is sharp. But in terms of actual number of visitors, it has not been so serious. A few thousand tourists may have stayed away during that period.

Then why are foreign airlines reducing their flights?

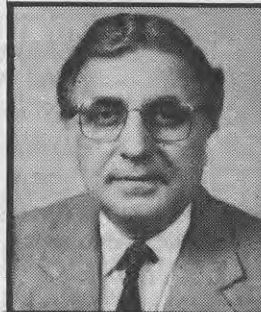
Only Indian Airlines has officially reduced the number of its flights. Qatar Airways and other airlines have not reduced any flights. The decision of Indian Airlines does not seem to be based on market trends, especially since it is a government-owned airlines.

What does Nepal need to do now?

When Indian Airlines has cut down its flight, Royal Nepal Airlines has to cash in. Unfortunately, we are not able to capture the market left by Indian Airlines. We have to make efforts to seize the opportunity given by Indian Airlines.

Can the national flag carrier do this?

The national flag carrier has got a good opportunity to grab the market. Last time when Indian Airlines suspended all of its flights for six months, Royal Nepal Airlines could not capture the market. We are losing the opportunity because we have been unable to do political maneuvering with India. If we have management skills and economic vision, we would have changed our fate. Instead of going with requests to foreign airlines officials, we would have our own efficient airlines. Our national flag carrier has the experience and manpower to grab the opportunity. RNAC needs to be strengthened through non-political and efficient management.



percent. "Nepal will see more tourists in the months of July and August as the government and tourism entrepreneurs have already taken initiatives to attract Indian tourists," an industry analyst says.

The mountaineering sector employs more than 10,000 people. According to the GEFONT, a trade union organization, the number of people working in the sector is estimated to be 100,000. If indirect employment is included, that figure crosses 400,000. As the main source of foreign currency and the top employment generat-

ing industry, any disturbance in the tourism sector will rock Nepal's economy. At a time when exports are shrinking, the decline in the tourism sector will hamper the total foreign currency reserves. Tourism has seen one of its worst phases following the hijack of Indian Airlines flight from Kathmandu in December 1999.

Indian Tourists : Indian tourists occupy more than one third of total tourist arrivals. Following the hijacking, the governments of Nepal and India imposed some restrictions to the Indian tourists. The re-

quirement for Indian tourists to carry passport or an official identity card has disrupted the flow of visitors from that country. The bandhs, political instability and negative publicity about Nepal also have kept Indian tourists away. The widespread publicity generated by anti-Indian activities triggered by slanderous remarks attributed to Indian film star Hrithik Roshan — which he has consistently denied making — also contributed to a decline in Indian tourists.

Despite hostile media publicity against

Chinese Tourists Will Transform Nepal's Tourism Sector'

— BIRENDRA BAHADUR BASNET

BIRENDRA BAHADUR BASNET, managing director of Buddha Air, is an energetic aviation entrepreneur. Basnet spoke to SPOTLIGHT on various issues related to the tourism sector. Excerpts:

How do you see the ongoing trend in Nepal's tourism sector?

After the massacre in the royal palace, the tourism sector has seen unexpected damage. When the country was in collective trauma, how could you expect the tourism sector to be unaffected. International media coverage of the tragic event has introduced Nepal globally. If we cash in on this coverage, we can reap benefits.

Will the tourism sector be affected for a long time?

I don't think so. It was just a short-term phenomenon. Even the violent demonstrations were controlled within a few days. Normalcy has already been restored in society. Because of all kinds of situation, tourist arrivals plummeted in the month of June. I don't think the tourism industry will suffer a long-term effect.

What is your general impression about the performance of the tourism sector?

The data of Nepal Tourism Board speak for themselves. The number of tourists were higher in the first five months of the year. Despite the Maoist violence and frequent political disruptions, the sector gathered pace. As Maoists have never targeted the tourists, no one feels any kind of threat. After the royal palace killing, the Maoist movement also received worldwide coverage. As the Maoists are a political force, they must be treated politically.

Have political parties realized the importance of tourism to the national economy?

Unfortunately, policy makers have not included us in the tourism sector. Airlines and

hotels are real sources of foreign currency. We are selling products. When travel agencies are put under tourism, why are airlines denied such rights? The government has The government may suffer short-term loss, but it will have long-term benefits. I have received unconfirmed reports that some airlines even do not have money to pay monthly salary to employees. How did such a situation appear. Even dollar passengers increased last year when the overall tourist arrivals was unsatisfactory.

What is your impression on competition?

Look, we are still flying passengers for 1992 prices. I have repeatedly requested government officials to reevaluate the air fare, but some airlines operators have opposed my idea. Because of seat saturation, prices is coming down. But the prices of other facilities at the airport, insurance and fuel have gone up by 400 percent since 1992. The airlines sector must have the facilities acquired by tourism industry.

How do you see the decision of Indian Airlines to reduce the number of its flights to Nepal?

It is natural for them to reduce their flights at a time when there is the lowest flow of tourists. The months of June, July and August are regarded as off season. I think the decision will be temporary. We hope the flights will increase during the season.

What impact will the national airlines face from a decline in tourist arrivals?

If there are no tourists, our airlines will have to close down. Our fare to Nepalis is cross subsidized by the fare foreigners pay. If anything goes wrong in the tourism sector, many other industries will also close down. Foreign goods shops, book stores and handicrafts outlets will be among the first to close down.

At a time when the Nepalese government is worrying about the decline in the number of foreign tourists, why is it not making any effort to take advantage of the opportunity given by Chinese tourists?



China has already cleared Nepal as an outbound tourist destination for its nationals. This is very important for a country like Nepal in a situation when overall tourist arrivals have declined. Our government is said to be working to finalize the document to allow Chinese tourists into Nepal. If we successfully take advantage of this opportunity, Nepal's tourism would be able to take a new direction. The arrival of Chinese tourists will transform the present situation. Nepal is going to be the cheapest destination for Chinese tourist.

Do you see any attractions for Chinese tourists in Nepal?

Yes, there are many attractions for them. Nepal is the birthplace of Lord Buddha and many Chinese would like to visit Lumbini. The Chinese know a lot of things about Nepal, including the Pagoda-style temples and thankas. The Chinese will also have experience of South Asian flavor when they visit Nepal.

Have you received any cancellations for the coming session?

Of course, the month of June was bad but I think the coming season is going to be good season for us. Actually, the month of June was Indian season but they were scared by the negative publicity made by Indian media. This is basically Indian season. ■

'Nepal Should Cash In On International Publicity'

— PRASIDHA B. PANDEY



PRASIDHA B. PANDEY, managing director of Shangrila Hotel, is one of Nepal's young hotel entrepreneurs. Pandey spoke to SPOTLIGHT on various issues related to tourism. Excerpts:

What does Nepal need to do to encourage tourists?

If the government wants a positive impact in the tourism sector, it must announce some drastic steps. First of all, the government must announce the visa-free program for tourists to show that it is really sincere about encouraging tourists. Secondly, the government must accept the open sky policy in international sector. The airlines should be given free access to fly to Nepal from those destination where Royal Nepal Airlines does not have any flights. Thirdly, the management of the RNAC should be handed over to the other airlines or parties on a lease basis.

Are you satisfied with the existing tourism policy?

There is nothing to be satisfied as there are many lapses in the policy. We have made many efforts in the development of agriculture sector and hydropower but we have been unable to benefit. Although tourism has played an important role in the national economy, it is yet to receive any priority like in agriculture and other sectors. If we focus our efforts on the tourism sector, we can attract 1 million to 2 million tourists a year and can earn up to \$2 billion a year. There is high profit in the tourism sector. The rate of return is high in tourism.

Why has not tourism gone ahead?

We have to see the history of the past four decades before evaluating the overall performance of the tourism sector. Had the government spent huge amount of money like in other sectors, the position of the tourism sector would have been far better than now. If the government invests more money in the sector, the tourism industry will bring much needed change. If we see the history of past four decades, we cannot find a situation when the tourism industry was on the verge of total collapse. Of course, it faced many ups and downs in its history but it does not have history of closing down. In the industrial sector, many industries have closed down but tourism industry is surviving. There are 500-700 travel and trekking agencies, 600-700 hundreds hotels, two dozens of airlines.

How do you see the role of the private sector?

The private sector has already completed its task by investing huge amount of money in the tourism sector. The private sector has invested in the hotel industry, resort, airlines, travel agencies and trekking agencies and other. Private sectors have proved that they are much more ahead than the government. The government has to back the private sector.

Do you mean more focus to the tourism sector?

Yes. Tourism needs support and focus from all sectors. We are now in a position to employ more than 1 million people. I think tourism is only tool for the development. If the government has taken small steps, the situation will change.

What do you mean by small steps?

First of all, the government has to hand over the management of Royal Nepal Airlines to some private parties like in the case of national banks. There are best of best international management groups which can operate the airlines successfully. If we are able to bring 1 million tourists, every citizen will reap benefits from it. The government has to take steps to push the tourism sector.

Do you see any advantage for tourism?

Yes, we have greater opportunity to develop Nepal as a prosperous country. We are sandwiched by two biggest country of the world. If we are able to lure the investment from the both country, Nepal will have a different future. We need to develop offshore banking system. We have to capitalize our position. We need to have to find a place for survival.

Do you see any possibility of the tourism sector recovering soon?

In this time, Nepal needs to be vocal. We have to get benefits from the international market. After the royal palace killings, Nepal has many sympathizers in the world. If we take the initiative, our country will definitely benefit. ■

Nepal, Indians continue to visit the country, which shows the positive outlook common Indian citizens have towards Nepal. "I am hopeful that the situation will improve in the days ahead," says Narendra Bajracharya, president of Hotel Association of Nepal.

Nepal Tourism Board has launched a vigorous marketing drive in India. As a result, Indian tourist arrivals slightly increased in the first quarter of 2001."If political parties do not call any violent activities like Nepal bandhs, we may have more Indian tourists in July and August," an industry watcher says.

For small-time travel agents, business is getting tough and it is becoming difficult to survive. Plenty of hoteliers and tourist outfits are cashing in on the sheer volume of Indian tourists coming in. "Normalcy has already returned and tourist arrivals will gradually improve," said Tek Bahadur Dangi, Director of Tourism Marketing and Promotion Department at Nepal Tourism Board. "The board is planning to go on a campaign to woo more tourists."

Losing venture : The beauty of the tourism industry lies in the spin-off it generates for other sectors, such as vegetable growers selling products to establishments catering to tourists. But for now, the related income is largely being generated in Nepal's neighbors. Local farmers simply cannot meet the demand, so tomatoes and other foodstuffs are brought in daily from India and Thailand. Fish and lamb are also usually imported.

The hotel industry officials claim they use local products as much as they can. However, hotels often have to serve Basmati rice from India because the local variety is not good enough. About 95 percent of the foodstuffs used by most non-star hotels are locally grown. The tourism industry has raised the incomes of many Nepalese such as hotel employees, tour guides, taxi drivers, restaurant workers, souvenir vendors and book sellers, among others.

Nepalese tourism industry is standing at a crossroads where new opportunities beckon and old habits refuse to go away. It is up to political parties, trade unions and other related organizations to help create the stability the tourism sector needs to thrive on. ■

YOUTH Freedom To Choose

Break free of the chains of conformity and act on your convictions, is the motto of many of today's youth

By AKSHAY SHARMA

“Do you still expect me to believe in slogans that belonged to Roman times and fight for them?” asks 25-year-old Pravigya Sherchan. “We have been born in a different period and raised on different realities and conditions. Yes, we read comics like Asterisk which taught us the names of Roman generals, but that’s it.”

The older generation sees today’s youth as a misguided and misused force. The youth point to a widening generation gap for their plight. The blame game continues, without an answer in sight.

“The world is changing so rapidly — it revolves at a speed of 36,000 miles per second in its axis in the vast universe — and we need to keep up with that,” says 26-year-old Anil Chettri. “A youngster could perhaps fly a fighter plane better than trained pilots of the previous generation because they have played high-tech war games on the computers,” he says.

Power has shifted and society needs to move accordingly, many youth say. “Earlier, power came from the barrel of the gun. Today, he who controls information is the most powerful,” argues 23-year-old Paras Pandey.

“It is supposed that the truth is knowledge, knowledge is considered wisdom but wisdom cannot be the truth, says an expert. “To contain power is a difficult task as the changing technologies will in time overtake the people who are trying to control it,” he adds.

“But we are bound to follow the path of believing in political boundaries. As Nepal is 100 years behind developed coun-

tries and the bigger neighbors are eyeing the country as if to swallow it in one gulp,” says Subash Lohani of the Institute of Foreign Affairs. “And because of reasons like these, the youth need to be more focused and alert.”

Alexander the Great was barely out of his teens when he set out on something he believed in and he died in his 30’s. He was fighting for something he believed in and immortalized himself.

“An 8th grade student, Temba Chhiri



Youth : Looking for identity

Sherpa, proved something more meaningful when he climbed Mount Everest: ‘Don’t think we should be diverted by the ideologies that dominated the older generation’. The youth should follow the command of their inner voice,” says Anil. “It is all the better if generations can walk side by side. US President George W. Bush represents a younger generation who people like Vice-President Dick Cheney and other members of the older generation by his side,” Anil says.

“Time is limited and the youth, keeping this in mind, should follow their own convictions. This would probably prevent them from being exploited,” he says. “I

don’t believe in the idea of expansion, conquests and political boundaries. Looking at the history of Nepal, Prithvi Narayan Shah started the campaign of creating a bigger Nepal at a young age. That was the dominant quest of his era.”

“The young are generally seen to be neutral, but it is easy to direct them on any path — good or bad, Subash says.

“The youth shouldn’t look to others for their betterment. They should do what their instincts tell them to. You create your own identity,” Anil argues. “My father shaves with a ustara (razor) and I have the liberty to use electronic razors.”

“The ideology of people hasn’t changed from the days of Alexander the Great. Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Machiavelli, Kautuliya and others gave new theories on the human predicament,” Anil argues. “They only tried to get a better understanding of the things people believed in and aspired for. But let’s also not forget that history has its share of leaders like Saddam Hussein, Adolf Hitler and Ivan the Terrible.”

“Your parents and guardians can nurse you and teach you how to walk. After a certain age, you will have learn to adjust to things you weren’t taught by your parents or books,” says Pravigya.

“We live in a world of limitations. In 300 years, only two people from Nepal were heralded as the most influential people of their times. One was Prithvi Narayan Shah and the other B.P. Koirala,” says Paras. “History has hailed people who have foreseen the future, fought for it and succeeded.”

“Every generation has the determination to beat the previous one at the ball game,” argues Anil. “Dependency is wrong. The world won’t give anything to you unless you take from it. But if the youth today make the same mistake by shouting slogans their exploiters want them to, they would be committing suicide.”

“Why are our political leaders older than our pilots?” Anil asks. Why, indeed? Perhaps this is the kind of question that goads the young and restless to set out to fight for a good cause. ■

'We Are Very Close To The Target Of Six Percent Growth'

—PRITHVI RAJ LIGAL

As the National Planning Commission (NPC) has already started works to prepare the approach paper for the Tenth Five Year plan, the meeting of t (NPC) on Tuesday endorsed the mid-term review of the Ninth Five Year plan (1997-2002). Vice Chairman of the NPC PRITHVI RAJ LIGAL spoke to BHAGIRATH YOGI on the findings of the review and other related issues. Excerpts:

How would you assess the achievement of the Ninth Plan on the basis of the findings of its mid-term review?

The written document of the Ninth Plan in fact came a year later and could be implemented only from the second year. This year, we decided to carry out mid-term review on the basis of the performance over the first three years, to avoid problems like lack of data at the middle of the year. At the macro-level we wanted an independent assessment of issues like poverty. We selected a research organization, as per the government procedures, to conduct macro-assessment. For sectoral assessment, we formed technical committees comprising NPC officials as well as experts from outside. The final document of the mid-term review has already been prepared and will be presented in meeting of the National Development Council.

So, how is the trend?

The independent analysis has shown that over the last three years we have attained a growth of around 5 percent, registering a shortfall of 1 percent. Last year, we attained a growth rate of 6.5 percent and this year a growth of around 5.9 percent is anticipated.

If this trend continues next year, we will be very close to the target of 6 percent growth. We should not forget that the plan document could be finalized only in the second year of the Ninth Plan. Similarly, political instability over this period and 'bandhs', strikes etc. have had adverse impact on different sectors of economy.

Despite such constraints, the growth of the non-agriculture sector at around 7 percent should be considered a respectable one. If there were no such constraints, the economy would have performed much better.

political instability over this period and 'bandhs', strikes etc. have had adverse impact on different sectors of economy.

Has there been any improvement in the employment situation?

The Ninth Plan has targeted to reduce the poverty level from 42 percent to 32 percent (at the end of the plan period) and reduce underemployment accordingly. The independent analysis, conducted by employing the methodology used by World Bank, has shown that the incidence of poverty has reduced to 37 percent from 42 percent over this period.

We are going to conduct a comprehensive study next year to assess the situation of poverty and unemployment in the country. The latest study has said robust growth of non-agriculture sector over the last three years and the remittances sent back by Nepalese working outside the country is mainly responsible for the reduction in the incidence of poverty in the country.

It is seen that up to 35 billion rupees per annum is entering Nepal through remittances sent by Nepalese working abroad. Some 30,000 to 40,000 Nepalese are going abroad every year for employment. This money is going to rural areas, directly contributing to raising the living standards of the people.

How could the government take credit for foreign employment that is mostly being pursued by the private sector?

The Ninth Plan has emphasized on promoting domestic as well as foreign employment. The government has taken a lot of policy decisions to promote and manage foreign employment. A Royal Nepalese Embassy has been opened in Qatar, Malaysia has opened up its market for Nepalese workers and the Middle East countries are demanding more Nepalese people. Of course, we have yet to exploit available opportunities to the full extent as we lack the skilled manpower required in the overseas market. For this, the government is planning to provide necessary training to the Nepalese who want to go abroad.

How effective have been the targeted programs to alleviate poverty?

A lot of targeted programs, South Asia Poverty Alleviation Program (SAPAP), Participatory District Development Program (PDDP), Sustainable

Development Program (SDP), West Terai Poverty Alleviation Project, micro credit programs, B.P. with the Poor, Mahila Jagriti, Poverty Alleviation Fund etc. are being implemented at the grass roots level. It is visible that such programs have helped in pulling the poor out of the poverty level. Hence, it can be said that there have been some positive developments in the areas of reducing poverty, attaining growth and creating employment opportunities over the last three years. So, there is no need to be pessimistic on the basis of the past experience.

On the basis of experiences so far, what will be the government's focus for the rest of the plan period?

There is a need to identify and give more drive to the sectors which have good potential for growth. For example, the Information Technology (IT) sector has tremendous potential for growth. More investment is required to develop facilities for this sector. Last year, we came up with the IT policy. Next year, the government is going to make major investment in developing an IT Park. Similarly, we are discussing about a modality — public-private partnership for employment creation — under which private sector could guarantee jobs for the trained manpower. We are giving emphasis on enhanced use of IT in the government job, in poverty mapping, in financial sector reforms etc. Agencies like the Asian Development Bank, UNDP, Japanese government etc. have shown interest in supporting this sector.

Similarly, in the real sector, too, areas like construction industries and real estate business have tremendous potential to contribute to the economy. Sustaining the growth of services sector as a whole including reforming the financial sector will be our priority area.

We also want to go more aggressively in the agriculture sector so that it could contribute significantly in poverty reduction. An integrated security and development program is being implemented with this in mind.

There have been reports of lack of coordination in the implementation of the Agriculture Perspective Plan (APP). What would you say?

APP was introduced as a long-term strategy. In fact, it is the responsibility of the Agriculture Ministry to take the lead role. But there have been some problems in inter-ministerial coordination. We, from the NPC, have been assisting the Ministry in working out better coordination with other ministries. There are other problems, too.

We have seen that the removal of subsidies on Shallow Tube Wells has had adverse impact on the expansion of irrigation. Increasing irrigation facili-



ties is one of the critical components in APP. Now we are engaged in dialogue with the multilateral agency to re-introduce subsidy in some ways. We have been saying that there should be review of every policy and necessary steps taken if it has some adverse impact.

Do you agree that Integrated Security and Development Program has failed to generate the impact it was supposed to make?

Development works have virtually come to standstill for quite sometime now in the areas affected by Maoist insurgency. Due to the feeling of insecurity, even the government employees are refusing to go to their jobs. Contractors refuse to bid tenders for development projects and the development budget is lying unspent. If this trend continues, there can never be development works in those areas and people will fall further behind from the national mainstream. So, the government has introduced this program in seven districts with security as a back-up.

We are going to implement development programs in a time-bound way in these districts and the budget has been allocated accordingly. Similarly, concerned ministries have been held responsibility to see that their staff are stationed in the designated offices. Some critical projects have also been identified under this program. For example, two roads have been identified in Gorkha district.

Electrification in district headquarters and other areas of Gorkha has been scheduled to be completed in the next two years. Income generating programs, skill development that would help in finding foreign employment, dairy development, chilling centers, education and health programs have been introduced. Similarly, we have provided additional budget to Royal Nepalese Army to complete the Salyan-Musikot road within this year. The road will later be extended to link Dhorpatan in Baglung district. So, I must that ISDP is being implemented with clear vision and in a long-term way. We will have to wait for some more time to see its impact. ■

Development works have virtually come to standstill for quite sometime now in the areas affected by Maoist insurgency. Due to the feeling of insecurity, even the government employees are refusing to go to their jobs.

'Maoists' Behavior Has Been Unpredictable'

—KESHAV RAJ SHARMA

KESHAV RAJ SHARMA is the director-general at the Central Bureau of Statistics. The bureau is currently conducting the mammoth exercise of a national headcount, which is done every 10 years. Although the Maoist rebels are disturbing the operation at some places, Sharma believes that it would be completed smoothly on time. He spoke to **SANJAYA DHAKAL** on various aspects of Census 2001. Excerpts:

How is the Census 2001 program going on?

The National Census 2001 program is going on at full speed in all the 75 districts of the country. More than 20,000 enumerators are collecting information from each and every household. About 5,000 supervisors are also assigned. Before this, we had training programs scheduled for enumerators. However, that program was affected by the national tragedy of June 1. While in cities and urban areas, the training programs could not take place, in other places informal and formal training did take place. In many districts, the census work could commence as early as June 9 or 10. But from June 15 onwards, the headcount has begun in earnest in all parts of the country. It will be finished by June 26.

Are there any significant changes in the procedure or questionnaire of this year's census as compared to previous ones? Have you tried to collect additional information?

There are limited possibilities to bring about changes in the census. Because of its very nature and because the census demands that every family, every individual be counted, the questions you ask are more or less similar — demographic and personal information like name, surname, caste, creed, ethnicity, gender, aca-

demic qualification, language, economic activity and so on. But within the scope of the population, some additions and deletions do happen accordingly.

Specifically, what are the changes in Census 2001?

In Census 2001, we have added questions to extract information regarding women's ownership of property like house, lands, dowry or cattle. Likewise, instead of merely asking whether one is

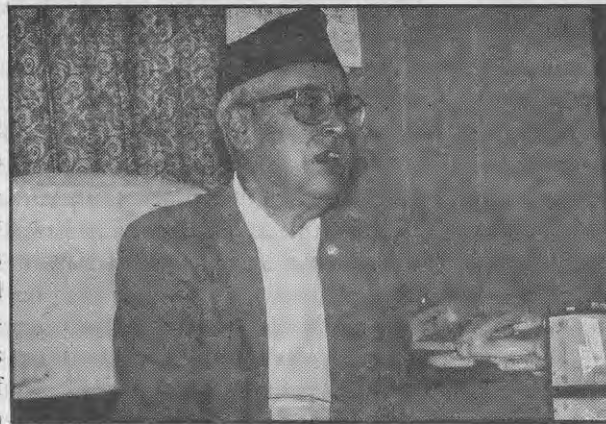
also added questions to find out and record the contributions of students who are also engaged in economic activities. Furthermore, in recent years it has been accepted that even if families are engaged in production of goods for their own consumption, that has to be recorded as economic activity. We have tried to include such expanded economic activity in the census this time. Moreover, there are additional questions regarding disabled persons. We

have tried to probe further about the guardians of children under 16 years of age. As the behavior of a person largely depends on how and who brought him/her up during the formative years, we have included questions to unearth more information on this. Questions on who brought up the individual, whether the individual lived with the father only or whether he or she had a stepmother, among others, are also included.

There are reports that Maoists have obstructed the census program in some parts of the country. How much are they hampering the process?

The Maoists have indeed affected our programs in some parts of the mid-western and far-western regions. Until now, their behavior has been very, very unpredictable. Sometime they allow the enumerators

to do their job while at others they don't. At some places, they allowed family listing and at some places, they didn't. Even within the same district, their behavior has been unpredictable. At some villages, they are allowing the enumerators to do their job and at other villages, they are disturbing them. Even within the same village, their behavior has been divergent from ward to ward. We have told our enumerators and supervisors to try to convince anybody who tries to disturb the



"Until now, their behavior has been very, very unpredictable. Sometime they allow the enumerators to do their job while at others they don't. At some places, they allowed family listing and at some places, they didn't. Even within the same district, their behavior has been unpredictable."

married or not, this time we have decided to probe a little further to find out whether the marriage is the first one or whether there has been polygamy and things like that. Regarding economic activities, there were no questions on the female economic activity and the household chores were not considered to be such activity. The respondents themselves used to shy away saying "What do I do?" But this time, we have added more questions to find out their actual contribution. We have

process by highlighting the objectives and necessity of this program. As far as separate security arrangements for enumerators are concerned, that we cannot do. It is not practical to provide security guards to each and every enumerator. Besides, we believe that any information extracted under such circumstance may not reflect the true picture. But by and large, our program is going on as expected and we are trying to complete it smoothly.

There has been criticism that the projections of the CBS are not scientific. Have you failed many times. How do you react to this?

It is not true that our projections have failed. In the national as well as district levels, our projections have been proper. There is no big margin of error as such. However, in certain places like Kathmandu city, our estimations have not been accurate. This is because of a large mobile/floating population. Such mobile households change their place of residence frequently. Even then, according to the principle of enumeration, we have tried to fix the usual place of residence and have tried to avoid the mobile ones. Because of such reasons, there could be some errors in our estimation. But the charge that our overall projections have failed is not true.

What kind of training do you provide to the enumerators?

During the 1991 census, it was decided that local primary teachers be hired as enumerators. Such teachers had to have passed the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exam, should preferably be below 40 years of age and be able to walk. Females were encouraged. We made a request for such persons to the district education office and upon their recommendation hired the enumerators keeping in mind the locality they had to cover and their understanding of the place. They were also given a crash course of five days or so. This year, too, we had set aside a five-day training. Unfortunately, because of this unexpected tragedy, the training could not be held for full five days in all the places. However, since we only have two forms — which, again, are not very complicated — we hope there will be no

“Fundamentally, the enumerators approach the families and ask questions. They only note down what the respondents tell them. There is no reason why enumerators would note down information by assuming or why they would write down something that is not told to them.”

problem. Further, previously there was one supervisor for every five enumerators. This year, the ratio is one to four. The supervisors are experienced and have a fair knowledge of their working field as they have already enlisted up to 4.2 million families in the country. Therefore, we expect there will be an improvement in the quality of the census this time.

Different ethnic minorities have charged that the enumerators do not note down the truth, saying their true identity and religion is distorted. What do you say?

Their question, too, is justified to an extent. The information collected may not be accurate. But it is wrong to accuse the enumerators. Fundamentally, the enumerators approach the families and ask questions. They only note down what the respondents tell them. There is no reason why enumerators would note down information

by assuming or why they would write down something that is not told to them. Maybe some enumerators write down in biased manner, I cannot claim hundred percent of our enumerators are good. But these are only an exception. In fact, what I think is the problem is that in many cases people, especially those from rural regions, are not aware of their ethnicity, language, age and religion. Besides, enumerators are not trained in sociological and anthropological aspects and they might not know about social intricacies. These shortcomings could lead to error. But what we must understand is this is not on purpose. I don't believe that enumerators would go ahead and note down falsi-

fied information on their own even when respondents are giving them information. However, I do not deny that there could be errors in our presentations. For instance, if there are many unknowns — like if many people say they don't know about their ethnicity or religion — the information of differ-

ent minorities could get amalgamated and end up being summed up into “others” category. But nothing is done on purpose. That is simply not possible.

How much is the budget for Census 2001?

The government has allocated Rs 280 million for the census. But as things stand now, I don't think all of that money will be spent.

Is there any plan to conduct a post-census sampling to test the accuracy of the data?

There will indeed be a post-enumeration survey to find out the coverage error. This will take place once the census work is completed. Most probably, we will conduct this towards mid-September.

When should we expect the report of Census 2001?

The preliminary report will be out before mid-August. ■

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CIVIL SOCIETY

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A part of academic curriculum, this book highlights different aspects of contemporary society for the general reader

By A CORRESPONDENT

Understanding various aspects of contemporary Nepalese society is essential for the younger generation, particularly those still in school, who are expected to shoulder the nation's responsibilities "Civics in Nepal", published for Grade 12 students, contains many things about Nepalese society that is useful for the general reader.

In consultation with the Higher Secondary Board, the book was prepared by prominent Nepalese and foreign schol-

Civics in Nepal
Grade 12 Textbook
Contemporary Society
Course

Edited and written by a
group of prominent Nepalese
and foreign scholars

ars, including Dev Raj Dahal, Dr. Alfred Diebold, Harka Gurung, Christine Stone, Karen Stone, Dipendra Tamang, Dr. Shreeram Prasad Upadhyaya, Dr. Trilokya Nath Uprety, Dr. Mana Prasad Wagley, Mark Willem and Shree Krishna Yadav.

The book, prepared in accordance with the curriculum of the Grade 12 course on contemporary society, includes units on introduction to society, challenges to Nepalese society, civic education, rights and justice, environment and sustainable development, and women in society.

One of the important features of the volume is that each unit begins with a

brief introduction, a description of the purpose, an outline of the structure and key points of the lesson. The book informs readers of many topics ranging from social change, human rights, women's empowerment to the environment. But its primary objective is to help readers develop the necessary knowledge and skills needed to be effective citizens in democracy.

The chapters also tell students about the ultimate right to control how government uses the authority delegated to it by

the people. The right to vote and the way to participate in the political decision-making process and constitutional limitations of the citizens are other important aspects of the volume.

The book, which was published with support from the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, and the United States Agency for International Development, is the first of its kind available for the younger generation of Nepalis.

Along with the importance of social structures and the role of citizens, the book also highlights the importance of the rule of law, transparency, accountability, regular free and fair elections and rights of the individual citizens. For a country that has experienced less than five decades of participatory politics, the book tries to explain the difficulties Nepal faces in the process of democratic transition. ■

SOCIAL STABILITY

Path To Peace

Recognizing the impossibility of carrying out development activities in the absence of peace, developing countries are making special efforts to advance harmony and amity.

In its effort to encourage peace in the country, SAP-Nepal has been working to raise awareness about the centrality of peace in national life.

As part of its effort to promote amity and conciliation in different sectors of life, SAP-Nepal has organized more than a half a dozen seminars and talk programs throughout the country. This book is a compilation of the proceedings and papers of such exercises organized in the capital.

The volume consists of articles, opinions and comments from participants of the seminars. The opinions expressed in the book provide a roadmap to achieving long-lasting peace in society.

At a time when everyone is talking about the urgency of restoring social stability and harmony for the long-term interest of the nation, this book provides an additional dimension to the discourse by incorporating the opinions of political parties, prominent members of civil society and grassroots workers. ■

Peace and Good Governance
Concerns, Issues and Strategy
Published by SAP-Nepal
Edited by Dr. Rohit Kumar
Nepali, Tirtha Prasad Gyawali
and Laxmi Neupane
Price: Not mentioned
Pages: 120

By M.S.KHOKNA



TRANSITION

ACCEPTED: Resignation tendered by **Omkar Prasad Shrestha**, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation, by His Majesty the King, upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

HANDED OVER: The portfolio of Minister for Tourism,

Culture and Civil Aviation, to **Govinda Raj Joshi**, Minister for Local Development, by His Majesty the King, upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

NOMINATED: **Dr. Roop Jyoti**, of Kathmandu, **Mrs Yangkila Sherpa**, of Solukhumbu and **Mr Dipta Prakash Shah**, of Dailekh, to the National Assembly, by His Majesty King Gyanendra Bir

Bikram Shah Dev.

Bhuanesh Kumar Pradhan, Harsha Man Shrestha, Surya Nath Bastola, Santa Bahadur Pun and Devi Prasad Bastola, to the National Hydropower Development Council, for two years, by the government.

FELICITATED: Litterateurs **Parshu Pradhan, Amar Kumar Pradhan**,

Jeevan Chandra Koirala, by the Pratibha Literary Journalists Group.

LEFT: Chief of the Army Staff General **Prajwalla Shumsher J.B. Rana** and his wife, **Mrs. Sindhu Rajya Laxmi Devi Rana**, for the United Kingdom on a weeklong visit at the invitation of the Chief of Defense Staff of U.K, Admiral Sir Michael Boyce. ■

ICC TROPHY

Keeping The Ball Rolling

Despite initial hiccups, Nepal's cricket team displays a fairly good game in Toronto

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

By winning the first game they played against Gibraltar, Nepal's cricket team proved they have overcome the series of hiccups that nearly barred them from playing in the Second International Cricket Council (ICC) Trophy in Toronto, Canada.

The Nepali cricket team defeated Gibraltar by 3 wickets on July 1 after successfully chasing relatively low target of 133 runs in 39 overs losing just 7 wickets.

But the team was subsequently defeated by Namibia on July 2. In their second match of the league play-offs, the Nepalese squad could not display their batting strength. The team could only score 131 runs losing 7 wickets. Namibia easily chased the score losing only 2 wickets.

By winning one and losing another, the Nepalese team displayed a fairly good game considering the pre-match hassles they had to undergo.

The Nepali cricket team had suffered a number of jolts before they finally left for Toronto. Right in the training season, the unfortunate royal tragedy took place. Then the Canadian high commission in New Delhi denied visa to four players of the original 11 and they had to be replaced by alternative players.

According to Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN), the Nepali team, originally scheduled to leave for Toronto on June 23, could do so only on June 25 owing to the visa delay. "The psychology of the players were disturbed because of the visa problem," said one CAN official.

Thankfully, the ICC rescheduled

Nepal's matches upon request to give a breathing time for the Nepalese squad who could reach there only in the eleventh hour.

Given the odds stacked against them, the team did display a remarkable ability by winning their first match against Gibraltar by 3 wickets on July 1. As four of the players were chosen from the replacement set, many thought Nepal would not be able to play to its full potential. "Definitely, the absence of

the original 11 could be a setback," Tarini Bikram Shah, vice-president of CAN had told SPOTLIGHT.

But the initial win has come a pleasant news to all. "That will be a great morale booster to our players," said a CAN member. But then Nepali team will have to play better than the one they played against Gibraltar as other teams are stronger.

During the first game, Nepali bowlers displayed good game while the batsmen failed to make a mark. During its first two matches, the Nepalese batsmen could not make any mark. None of the batsmen could score half century.

Nepal will have to play matches against Namibia, West Africa and Germany to qualify for the second round. The top three teams of the tournament will get the opportunity to play in the 2003 World Cup in South Africa. ■

Lovely Draw

The Fair & Lovely lucky draw organized by the Nepal Lever Limited has announced winners of prizes worth Rs 1.5 million. Ms Nita Kadariya of Baneshwor, Kathmandu has bagged the first prize — a beautiful gold and diamond necklace and ear-rings worth Rs 2,35,000. She was handed over the prize by popular model Monica Chand amidst a function held in Kathmandu last week. Five persons bagged the second prize — Rs 50,000 worth gold and diamond necklace and ear-rings set — including Ranjita Parajuli (Ganabahal), Alka Srivastav (Kopundole), Gopal Bajgain

(Haraiya, Morang), Anwar Khan (Anarmani, Birtamode) and Padma Nepali (Chauraha, Dharan). Other 100 persons won the third prize — each bagging Rs 12,000 worth diamond ear-rings. Fair & Lovely is the premium brand of fairness cream available in Nepal. Earlier the brand was sold in Nepal as Indian product. But following the establishment of Nepal Lever Limited — a subsidiary of Hindustan Lever Limited — the fairness cream has been available under Made In Nepal brand. This brand is regarded as very popular among Nepalese consumers. ■



Nita receiving the award : Lady luck

Now In Town

BOOK

Anti-Competitive Practices in Nepal R.Adhikari/D.C. Regmi/2001	Rs. 100.00
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(Source : Himalayan Book Center, Bagh Bazar, Kathmandu, Ph : 242085)

Video (English)

- Tomb Raider
- Animal
- Sword Fish
- Evolution
- I Spit On Your Grave
- Angle Eye
- Applicant
- Shrek
- A Kinghts Tale
- Misic II



Hindi

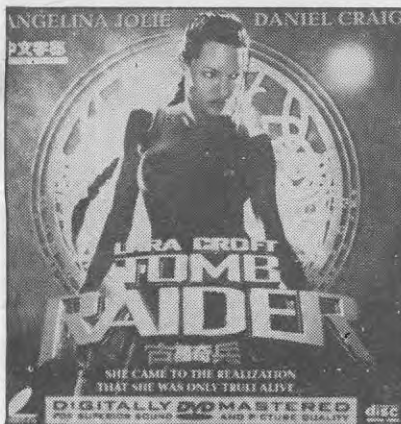
- Lagaan
- Gadar
- Pagalpan
- Ek Rishtaa
- Avgat
- Albela
- Pyar Tune Kya Kiya
- Master
- Daman
- Bangal Tiger

(Source : Super Star Video, New Road)

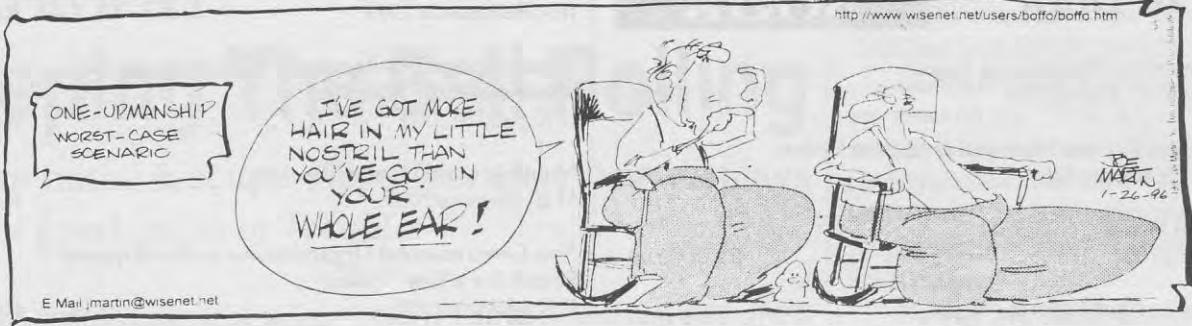


"Do not yearn for physical joy and, by so doing, discard the more permanent joy of inner calm and contentment."

- SATHYA SAI BABA



MR. BOFFO



MARY WORTH



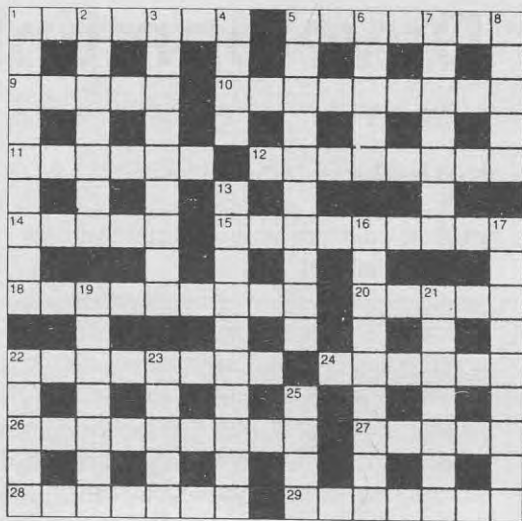
GASOLINE ALLEY



FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1. Account brought back about old soldier (7)
5. Turn up near part of theatre where flier sits (7)
9. Puzzle posed by part of army vehicle (5)
10. Sally holding on for a draw (9)
11. Pig had trapped tail (6)
12. Answer lies between plump and lean ñ he thinks its predetermined (8)
14. Wind, rain — who's responsible for a lot of it? (5)
15. An adroit manoeuvre for crossing river down south (9)
18. Previously dined on a pound, or free? (9)
24. Author pays his country (6)
26. Early development of parking connected to business and business centre (9)
27. Lager specially brewed for Sir Edward (5)
28. Castle Howard's entrance adapted — it's used for school books (7)
29. Beige or white key (7)

DOWN

1. Changes angle of hat, coming to gate (9)
2. Where draughts might be found in a ship (2,5)
3. Rustic Work depicting clergyman on the booze (9)
4. Wine — rather ordinary sort, especially to start with (4)
5. Charter man devised for Welsh town (10)
6. Where to see imperial aristocrat's original pal (5)
7. Forecast made by North Briton about sign of danger (7)
8. Article taken over by newspaper ñ that's plagiarism (5)
13. A girl with a name for being capricious and bossy (10)
16. Coming back on stream (9)
17. Cartel had organized ecclesiastical building (9)
19. Not divulging the queen appearing in old as well as new testament ? (2,3,1,1)
21. Peevishness of climber newspaper's shown up (7)
22. Diarist puts last of money into savings plans (5)
23. Date with policeman set up ñ what about that! (5)
25. Song man heard (4)

Across: 1. Trooper 5. Cockpit 9. Rebus 10. Sortilege 11. Shadow 12. Fatalist 14. Indra 15. Antarctic 18. Exonerate 20. Cover 22. Potterer 24. France 26. Precocity 27. Elgar 27. Satchel 29. Natural

Down: 1. Turnstile 2. On board 3. Pastorate 4. Rose 5. Carmarthen 6. China 7. Predict 8. Theft 19. Managerial 16. Recurrent 17. Cathedral 19. On the Q.T. 21. Vinegar 22. Pepys 23. Epoch 25. Hymn

SOLUTION

BRIDGE

NORTH 3-5
 ♠ 9 6 2
 ♥ A J 7
 ♦ A 6 5 3
 ♣ Q 10 9

WEST **EAST**
 ♠ Q 10 4
 ♥ 8 6 4 3 2 ♥ K Q 10
 ♦ Q 9 4 2 ♦ K J 10 7
 ♣ 6 4 3 2 ♣ K 8 5

SOUTH
 ♠ A K J 8 7 5 3
 ♥ 9 5
 ♦ 8
 ♣ A J 7

Vulnerable: Neither
 Dealer: East

The bidding:
 East South West North
 1♦ 1♠ Pass 2♦*
 Pass 4♣ All pass
 *Requests more information

Opening lead: Diamond deuce

“Everything has two handles, one by which it may be borne, another by which it cannot.”

— Epictetus

Every player beyond the beginner stage knows how to take a simple finesse. However, finesses are not always as simple as they may seem.

Today's duplicate deal provides an example of how to win the maximum number of tricks possible.

North's cue-bid of East's opened suit promises spade support and game-invitational values. With a so-so overcall, South would merely make a minimum rebid. However, with today's holding, South has the values to jump directly to game.

After South wins dummy's diamond ace, he leads a trump to his king to get bad news. It's easy to finesse against East's trump queen, but how can he manage to pick up both the trump queen and the club king?

A routine approach will not get the job done. If South leads a heart to dummy's ace to finesse against East's queen, he cannot return to dummy to finesse in clubs. So the club finesse must come first.

However, when South leads dummy's club queen and East doesn't cover, South must drop his jack under dummy's queen. With the jack out of the way, dummy continues with the club 10. If East covers, South wins and gets back to dummy with the club nine to finesse against the trump queen. And if East doesn't cover the club 10, the lead is still in dummy to take the trump finesse.

At rubber bridge, most would be satisfied with game and an overtrick. At duplicate, one must learn how to finesse with “finesse.”

Competition In Electricity: Challenges For Development I

By RAJENDRA K. KSHATRI

Nepal's hydropower potential provides opportunities for the development of projects ranging from micro units to those on a grandiose scale. If Nepal makes an honest case, this potential would be able to promote its economic recovery. However, pleasing as these perspectives are, they need to be handled cautiously. Although hydropower prospects within Nepal are growing, developing dams poses a lot more problems these days. Hydropower development has been complicated by the activities of non-government organizations that are opposing large-scale, multipurpose dam projects. Meanwhile, the "big-versus-small" controversy in the country has aggravated the situation. Nepal, where democratization is still nascent, organizations and individuals opposed to dams have found fertile ground for cultivating indigenous opposition. Nevertheless, the government still has enough doubt to get the benefit.

Nepalese laws in some jurisdictions have continuing openings for opponents to stop projects for any reason. In fact, projects have the challenge of developing themselves without significant opposition from affected parties either in the surrounding communities or outside. Non-utility projects, also known as independent power projects, can be particularly vulnerable to this type of risk. Since Nepal does not have developed acquisition, compensation and resettlement regulations, this risk is very difficult to avoid. Given our experience, there is still time to develop meaningful resettlement and rehabilitation legislation together with firm guarantees against severe environmental damage that would help create a climate conducive to the hydropower business.

An important consideration in developing any hydropower project is configuring it to maximize resource benefit. Developing new projects through private investors, the government needs to optimize resource benefit. Depending on the size of the power station to be constructed, a typical configuration can be determined for Independent Power Producers (IPPs). Hence, hydropower projects through IPPs should be developed with a classification of large, medium and small projects concentrating on the big load centers, regional centers and areas bordering India. The present focus on IPPs' involvement in the domestic hydro market alone has created a crucial side effect because of their safety net of "take or pay" principle.

Because of this, Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) has to shut down all its projects and allow spillover, whereas projects like Khimti and Bhote Kosi have been running with full load. This has led to substantial losses to the NEA. This is because of the IPPs' involvement entirely in the domestic market. If this is continued with upcoming IPP projects, the NEA can expect to suffer heavy losses caused by the shutdown of most of its projects. Fresh problems emerge when the Kali Gandaki A (KGA) becomes operational. There is little doubt that the KGA will have to be shut

down because of the NEA's liability to take power generated by private projects. It was only less than a decade ago that Nepal dared to use the word "privatization" in the hydropower sector. But there have been hesitant steps.

One of the central aims of electricity privatization was to introduce competition and attract capital in the sector. With the promulgation of the relevant statute, electricity became just another factor of production. The generation of electricity no longer is a natural monopoly. IPPs generate their output along with local utility companies. Generation, transmission and distribution have become separate businesses. Competing generators can use the transmission and distribution system to sell electricity. However, the full complexity and connectivity associated with hydropower development has not been sufficiently addressed with the Built Own and Transfer (BOT) concept. The new industrial structure has not gone as far as might have been hoped. And government efforts behind the scenes seem to have been just as cursory.

The objective of the government on how to proceed with potential hydropower development still seems vague. Virtually every sector of the economy is deteriorating by the day because of chronic political crises. In addition, the country seems to be seeking its own security. The government is giving greater attention to this idea than to developing meaningful settlement of issues. Hydropower project participants in Nepal have striven to stay out of this political condition. Nevertheless, hydropower products and services companies are watching the situation closely as it is one of the factors determining their ability to participate in current and future projects. Wishful political talk has not helped realizing the country's hydropower potentials.

The future of Nepal lies primarily in the judicious harnessing of its hydropower potential. Generating enough power to meet the domestic need and bulk export of energy to neighboring countries are the challenges for the country. The dynamics of potential hydro markets in South Asia call for an in-depth investment program for short- and long-term business in Nepal. There are also prospects for regional cooperation in power trade under the Growth Quadrangle Concept with SAARC. An international conference on energy in South Asia, held in Kathmandu in March last year, accepted the potential prospects for a regional electricity market for SAARC countries, emphasizing the cardinal role of Nepal as a dormant supplier of hydropower to the region. At the moment, the huge market for electricity in India is physically accessible from Nepal. Some estimates suggest power deficits in northern India alone by the year 2008 would be 18,000 MW. Therefore, the government must make timely intelligent judgements on the generation of power and possible integration of markets.

To be continued

Kshatri writes on water resources

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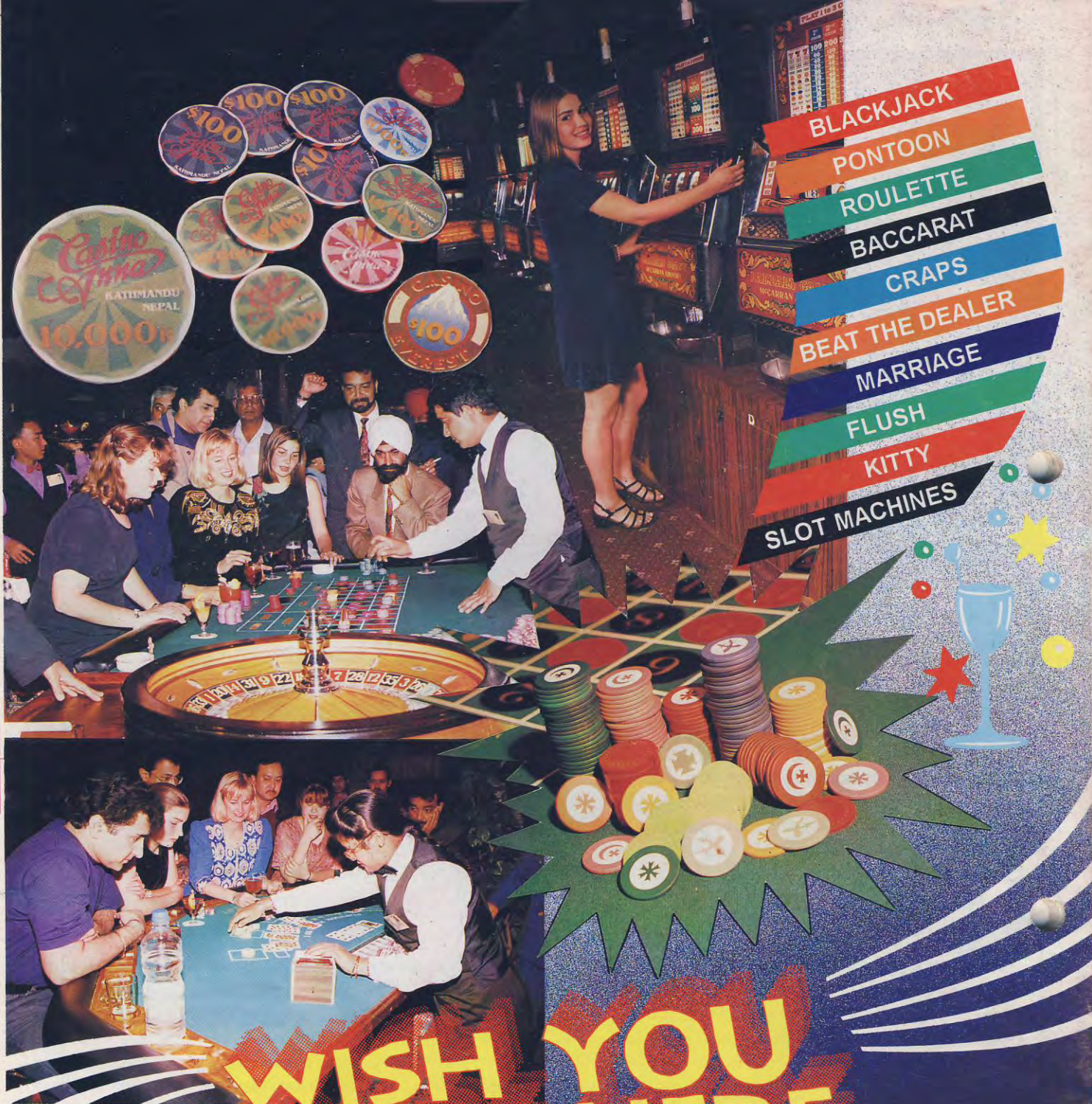
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